





The Hamlyn History  
of the World in Colour  
Volume Nineteen

# THE FIRST WORLD WAR: CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES



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# THE FIRST WORLD WAR: CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES

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# Introduction BY DAVID THOMSON

This book is dedicated  
to the memory of  
David Thomson  
January 1912–February 1970

The Great War of 1914–18 still appears as a cataclysmic event, even though over half a century has elapsed since it ended. The great powers of Europe had avoided war with one another for some forty-three years. In August 1914 they seemed to stumble into it unintentionally. Everyone thought that the battle would be short and that they would be 'home in time for Christmas'. In fact the war was to last for four years and people were driven by events to abandon their optimistic and consoling misapprehensions. Instead they persuaded themselves, with equal fallaciousness, that they were engaged in the last general conflict, a 'war to end wars'. Certainly no government expected, or was adequately prepared for, the extravagant sort of warfare in which it found itself embroiled.

Naturally enough, the causes of this surprising and unwanted war have, ever since, been a matter of controversy among both politicians and historians. Even today, the relative importance of the different policies, conflicting interests, circumstances and personalities which contributed to its outbreak remains in dispute. Dr Andrew has given an explanation which most western historians would probably now accept.

The most intractable conflict of all was the Balkan rivalry between Russia and Austria-Hungary. Britain, France, Italy and even Germany, had repeatedly shown that over colonial disputes they were all, in the end, prepared to seek a settlement without war. The French desire for revenge against Germany for 1871, and for recovery of Alsace and Lorraine, had never quite died, but it had died down. But the clash between the two ancient dynastic empires of Russia and Austria-Hungary seemed to be beyond compromise. Linked as it was with rival hot-headed nationalist movements in the Balkans on one hand, and through the system of great alliances with the fears and tensions of Europe on the other, here was the flash-point of the explosion.

The Great War (as it was called throughout the years covered by this volume) began, then, as a civil war in Europe. Only in 1917 did it become more genuinely a world war. But for various reasons the conflict was, from quite an early stage, world-wide in its repercussions and its future consequences. This came about because of the vast colonial empires of the major European powers, which collectively dominated world trade, and not least because the war released the

momentous new world force of the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia. The new idealism which crept into allied statements of peace-aims, notably through President Woodrow Wilson's 'Fourteen Points', roused the hopes of disunited nationalities. The victory of the western maritime powers of Britain, France, the United States, Belgium, and the Commonwealth, proclaimed a new world made 'safe for democracy'.

What most wrecked these hopes, highest at the moment of the Paris peace conference of 1919, were the uncontrollable effects of the war on the pre-war world economy. It was not simply that vast wealth and millions of lives had been destroyed, or that individual countries, notably Great Britain, had now lost their lucrative overseas investments and become debtor-nations. What mattered most in a material sense was that the pre-war economy, the fabric of international trade and investment, was hopelessly disrupted and dislocated. With the central market of Germany temporarily gone, the Russian market closed, industrial production everywhere distorted by wartime needs, Europe needed more drastic and deliberate reconstruction than was possible in the desperate conditions of the immediate post-war years. Politics, as Maynard Keynes pointed out, seemed destined to frustrate economic recovery at every point. It created a host of new states whose frontiers often made little economic sense, it exaggerated attempts to exact monetary reparations from Germany, it insisted on the repayment of war-debts, and it sought too hasty a return to 'normalcy'.

Economics, as it were, had its reprisals on politics. The resulting mass unemployment of the inter-war years, the slumps induced by the shrinkage of international trade, the revulsions of inflamed nationalism, especially important in Italy and in Germany, ruined hopes of democracy's survival in the worst-hit countries. Militant, ruthless authoritarian movements arose during the nineteen-twenties, and were quick to learn from the successful Bolsheviks the potency of a single-party state monopolising all the resources of modern terror, propaganda and state power. The dictatorships of Mussolini in Italy and of Hitler in Germany were, in a real sense, consequences of the Great War.

It is one of the merits of Dr Andrew's book that it brings out clearly these continuities. Fascism was perhaps the chief

beneficiary of the war, for it could hardly have gained power and flourished so much without war's aftermath. But another beneficiary was communism, and not only because the collapse in war of both the tsarist regime and the liberal provisional government which succeeded it in 1917 opened the door to Lenin's Bolshevik Party.

Communist agents and propagandists exploited fully the conditions of unrest and distress which prevailed after the war. They saw in them the best guarantee of a world proletarian revolution. It took nearly two decades to prove that the fears their methods aroused did far more to help fascism than to promote communism. Repeatedly, communist agitation was the perfect excuse for fascist *coup*s, and weak parliamentary democracies did not give place to proletarian dictatorship, only to fascist dictatorship.

Economic crisis, then, gave rise to political crisis, and to revolution, during the inter-war years: and political crisis gave rise to international crisis, and eventually to a second world war. The new League of Nations was gravely weakened from birth by the exclusion of Soviet Russia and Germany, and by the abstention of the United States, its chief sponsor. We cannot but speculate whether it might have succeeded more but for the mounting challenges of Italy, Japan, and Germany. Perhaps it could have achieved fuller international co-operation in social and economic affairs, but still without succeeding in its ultimate purpose of preventing war. But once aggressive military movements were in complete power in Japan, Italy and Germany, and these three powers even drew together in common cause under the misleading title of the 'Anti-Comintern Pact', a major war was probably inevitable. The collapse of the League of Nations as a peace-keeping organisation and the inertia of its major props in Europe, Britain and France, increased the probability.

In these ways, there are certain links of cause and effect between the two world wars. It would be oversimplifying to see them entirely, as Winston Churchill once suggested, as parts of one 'Thirty Years' War', or one great German challenge to the rest of Europe. The strongest evidence to the contrary is the role in contemporary history of China and Japan: and the author does well to devote a special chapter to explaining this role. Both during and after the Great War, Japan progressively rose to a position

of supremacy in Asia. It was above all, as the author shows, China's chronic division and weakness that made this possible.

The shifting balance of power in the Far East is as much a part of world history, helping to explain the drift of events during the inter-war years, as is the rise of fascist dictatorships in Europe. It has even been suggested, with some reason, that the Second World War should be seen as having begun not in 1939, parochially, with a German attack on Poland, but in 1937, when Japan embarked on full-scale war against a disintegrating China. In the same sense, China's communist revolution is probably the most important single event amid the complex aftermath of the Second World War.

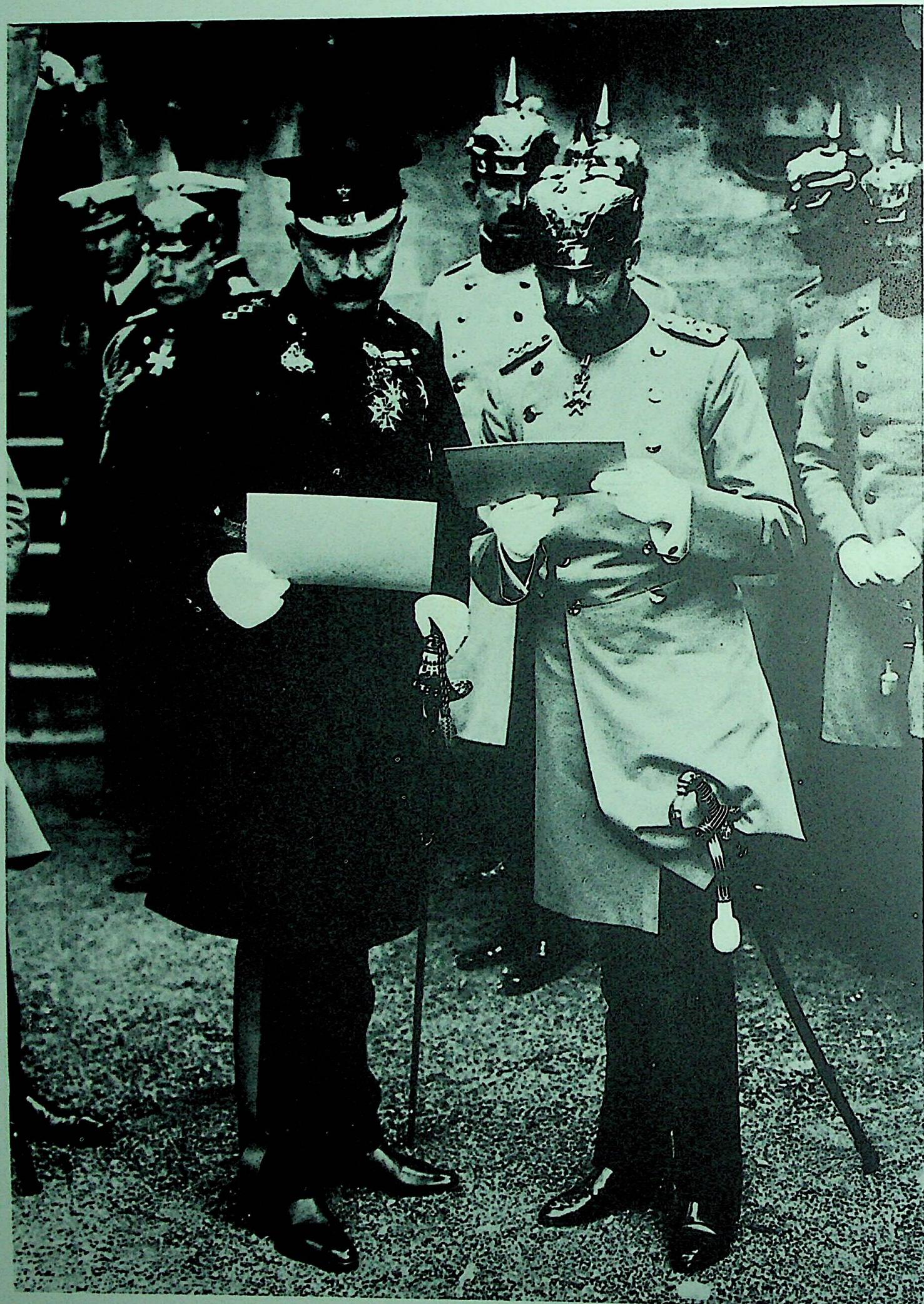
During the last twenty-five years the serious study of so-called 'contemporary history' (i.e. twentieth-century history) has become both fashionable and respectable. Much harm was done by the ignorance and the myths about the peace-settlement of 1919 and the Allied treatment of Germany in the nineteen-twenties, and it is entirely to the good that research and better perspective have now made possible more objective accounts of those years.

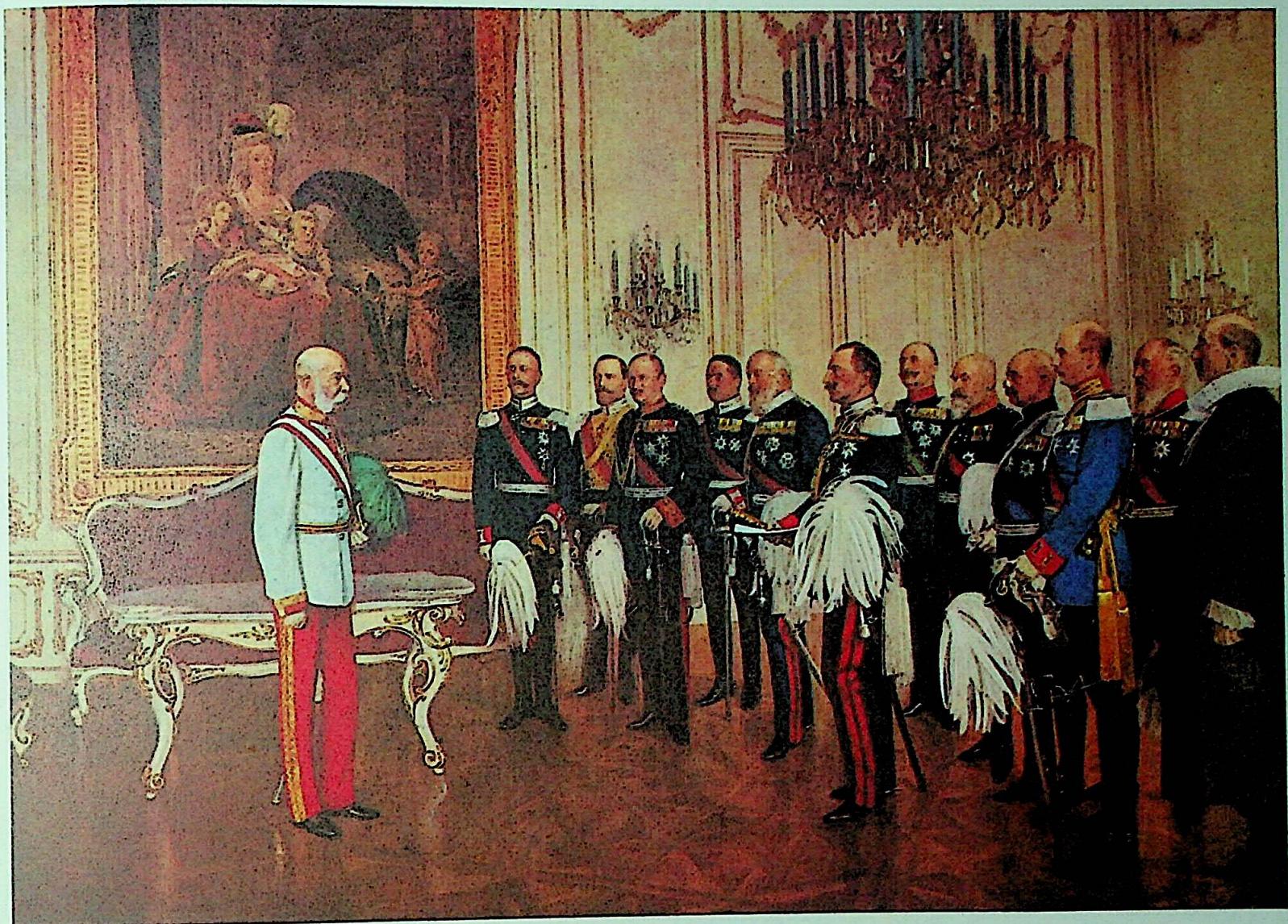
The author is a young Cambridge historian who has researched into early twentieth-century diplomatic history, and—as this book shows—he is professionally well qualified to state clearly the results of modern thought and study relating to the period. His book, together with the carefully chosen illustrations, will be warmly welcomed as an up-to-date, concise, and remarkably well-balanced explanation of these dramatic and terrible years.

It remains for other contributors to deal with the coming and the outcome of the Second World War. There is little doubt that, just as the causes of the First must be looked for in the whole sequence of events from at least 1871 onwards, and in the unique situation which they had produced by 1914, so historians will trace the origins of the Second back to the events here chronicled. History never divides sharply into separate phases, and it is wise to recall how small a part conscious human intention plays in determining the outcome of great events. Nobody went to war in 1914 to precipitate a communist revolution in Russia, or to set up a League of Nations, or to provide a home for the Jews in Palestine, yet these were among its most important consequences. The moral to be

drawn from this period is, perhaps, that modern warfare is not only an exceptionally extravagant mode of action, but also a most unreliable and uncontrollable means of achieving one's aims in the twentieth century.

*The illustrations were selected by the author in collaboration with the publishers.*





## The approach to war

*The consequences of the war of 1914-18 are to be world-wide, but its causes lie in Europe; the growth of German power fatally disturbs the European balance; Austria plans the destruction of 'the Serbian nest of vipers'; an assassination in the Balkans begins the First World War.*

For most of its history the continent of Europe has been more often at war than at peace. Viewed against this background, the four years of war which followed August 1914 were less remarkable than the forty-three years of peace between the great powers of Europe which preceded them. What was most surprising about the great age of European imperialism in the later nineteenth century was not the national rivalries which it inevitably produced, but the success with which these rivalries were contained. For centuries past, wars had been fought in Europe to decide the ownership of a few hundred square miles of territory. During the thirty years after 1871, the great powers of Europe divided between

them more than ten million square miles of the earth's surface without once coming to blows among themselves.

Within Europe itself, the most serious and persistent source of tension during the half century before the First World War was the Balkan rivalry between Russia and Austria-Hungary. This rivalry was an inevitable consequence both of the geographic position of these two powers, and of the progressive disintegration of the Turkish empire in the Balkans. What was remarkable was not that this rivalry gave rise to a series of international crises, but that these crises were so often settled without recourse to war.

The long period of peace between the

*Left: the Kaiser meets George V for the last time at a royal wedding in 1913. William was later to complain on the outbreak of war: 'To think that George and Nicky (the tsar) should have played me false! If my grandmother (Queen Victoria) had been alive, she would never have allowed it.'*

*Above: the Kaiser leads a delegation of German princes to meet his ally, Emperor Francis Joseph of Austria-Hungary. The Hohenzollerns had been kings of Prussia since 1703. The Habsburgs had ruled Austria since 1278. Both dynasties, like the Romanovs in Russia, were to be swept away by the First World War.*

*(Heeresgeschichtliches Museum, Vienna.)*



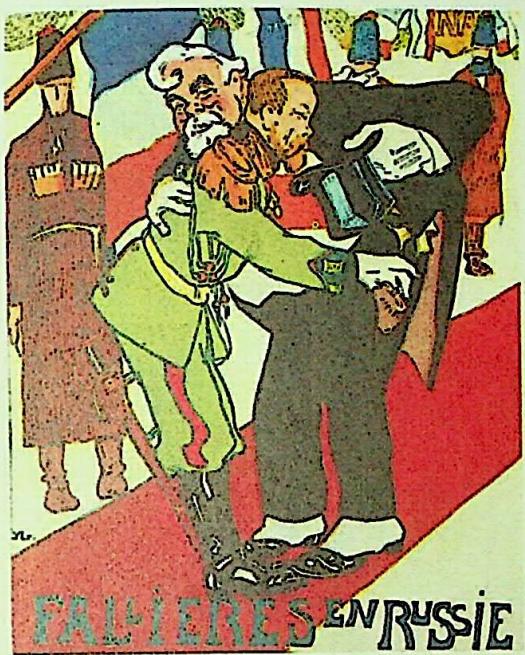
great powers of Europe was partly produced by the even distribution of power between them during the later nineteenth century: a balance eventually disturbed by the enormous growth of German strength. But it was a consequence also of the fact that the great powers had learned a self-restraint in their dealings with one another which would have been unthinkable only a century before. Europe, in short, seemed to have become more civilised. By the beginning of the twentieth century a generation had grown up which, for the first time in European history, had begun to think of warfare as a thing of the past. Even when Europe finally went to war in 1914, many believed that they

were doing so for the last time, that they were fighting a war to end all wars.

### The alliance system

There had been no war between major European powers since 1871. The Franco-Prussian War, concluded in that year, had been one of the turning points in the history of nineteenth-century Europe. It had ended two centuries of French supremacy on the continent of Europe and, at the same time, enabled Bismarck to complete the unification of Germany under Prussian leadership. The war changed Bismarck himself from poacher to gamekeeper. For a decade

*Above: Europe on the eve of the First World War. Germany and Austria-Hungary had been allies since 1879. But even at the beginning of the twentieth century there had been few more unlikely European alignments than a Triple Entente of England, France, and Russia. Its formation was made possible only by the ineptness of German diplomacy.*



*Far left: the tsar picks the French president's pocket: a French comment on the Franco-Russian alliance. Russia's loyalty to the alliance owed a good deal to its dependence on French loans. By 1914 the enormous total of twelve and a half thousand million francs (one quarter of France's entire foreign investment) had been lent to Russia. The Russian government kept an agent in Paris whose job it was to bribe the French press to present an optimistic picture of the Russian economy and persuade the French public to support the Russian loans. Every Paris newspaper of note with the single exception of the socialist (later communist) *L'Humanité* received a share of the spoils. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)*

*Left: the Kaiser in a characteristic warlord pose. No monarch in the last hundred years has been so fond of dressing up in military uniforms. He kept up the pose even in his study (below left) where he wrote his correspondence seated astride a saddle. William's ostentation reflected his constant craving for attention. He was once told by the father of Bethmann-Hollweg, the German Chancellor on the outbreak of war: 'Your Majesty finds life impossible unless Prussia applauds you daily, Germany weekly, and Europe once a fortnight.'*



he had used war ruthlessly for the aggrandisement of Prussia. But in 1871 he suddenly discovered a new role as the chief defender of the peace of Europe. The new state of Germany, Bismarck believed, was 'a sated power' with no further territorial ambitions. France, on the other hand, robbed by Germany of Alsace-Lorraine, would 'regard revenge as its principal mission'.

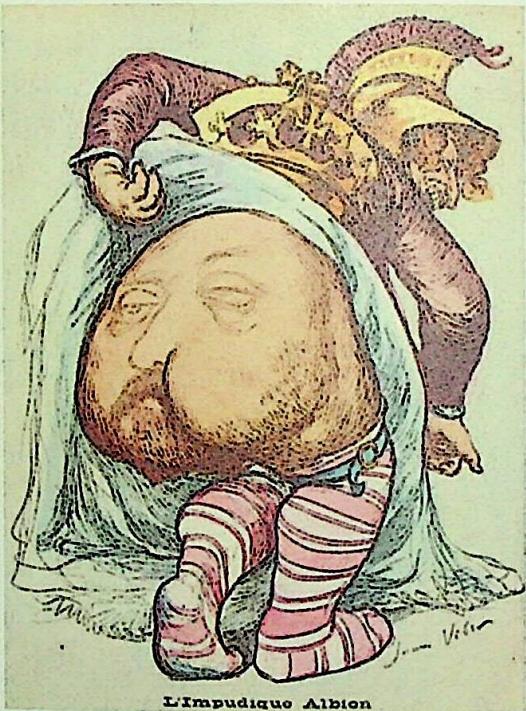
The main object of Bismarck's diplomacy, therefore, was to preserve the position Germany had won, and guard against the danger of a French war of revenge. He relied at first on an informal understanding between the three great continental monarchies—Germany, Russia, and Austria-Hungary—to keep the French Republic in its place. That understanding, however, broke down in 1878 because of Austro-Russian rivalry in the Balkans. From 1879 onwards, Bismarck began to replace the informal understanding of the eighteen-seventies by a series of formal (and sometimes overlapping) alliances—with Austria from 1879, with Russia from 1881, with Italy from 1882—all concluded with the same aim of keeping France isolated, and therefore powerless.

#### France ends her isolation

Great Britain became increasingly convinced during the later nineteenth century that its 'splendid isolation' from European alliances was a tribute to its strength. France, on the contrary, never regarded its own isolation during the twenty years after the Franco-Prussian War as less than igno-



however, there still seemed no real likelihood of war between the Dual and Triple Alliances. The two major rivalries which divided these alliances—France's desire for revenge against Germany, Austria's rivalry with Russia in the Balkans—had both receded into the background. No French statesman of any consequence still dreamed of a war of revenge against Germany. Austria and Russia both seemed determined to abide by the agreement which they had made in 1897 to put the Balkans 'on ice'. To most European statesmen at the beginning of the twentieth century, the only serious threat of European conflict seemed to lie in the imperial rivalries between Britain and her future allies in the First World War, France



minous. The first chance for France to escape from this isolation came soon after Bismarck's fall from power in 1890. With Bismarck safely out of the way, Kaiser William II rashly decided to allow the alliance with Russia to lapse. Hitherto, though Russia had sometimes tried to frighten Bismarck by threatening to ally with France, it had never seriously intended to carry out its threat. The Russian court, in particular, had an almost physical horror of the French Republic which it regarded as an inherently subversive institution. The future Tsar Nicholas II, the last of the Romanov dynasty, declared in 1887: 'May God preserve us from alliance with France. . . . It would mean the invasion of Russia by revolution.'

Russia's diplomatic estrangement from Germany in 1890, however, was accompanied by a growing financial dependence on France. Russia in the late nineteenth century was, at one and the same time, an underdeveloped country and a great military power, increasingly conscious that its future

as a great power depended upon the modernisation of the Russian economy. This, in turn, required massive foreign investment, investment which was available only from France. It was, above all, its dependence on French investment which persuaded the Russian government to conclude, by stages, an alliance with France which was finally ratified in 1894.

By 1894, therefore, the four great powers of continental Europe were already grouped in two rival alliances. Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Italy were joined together in the Triple Alliance, (though Italy was neither a great power nor, by 1902, an effective member of the Triple Alliance). France and Russia were united in the Dual Alliance. The making of these two alliances was later blamed by many as the root cause of the First World War. It was, said Jagow, the German foreign minister, in his final meeting with the British ambassador in August 1914, 'this damned system of alliances' which had dragged Europe into war.

At the beginning of the twentieth century,



Far left: the British lion being mauled by the Boer bull (with the face of Kruger, the Boer president): a French comment on the Boer War (1899-1902). Britain took two and a half years and needed 390,000 men to defeat 80,000 Boers. By ending the popularity of 'Splendid Isolation', the war produced a profound change in British attitudes towards the continent. 'Without the South African War which bled Great Britain and made her wiser', wrote the French ambassador in 1904. 'the Anglo-French Entente would have been impossible'. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.) Two cartoons which illustrate the remarkable change in Anglo-French relations during the early years of the twentieth century. The first (above left), published in 1901 and showing the features of Edward VII on the posterior of Perfidie Albion (Britain), was characteristic of the deep hostility between the two countries during the Boer War. In 1900 the British ambassador had been temporarily withdrawn after the award of the légion d'honneur to a cartoonist well known for his offensive cartoons of Queen Victoria. (Bibliothèque

Nationale, Paris.) The second cartoon (left) published by the same magazine in 1903, shows Marianne (the symbolic figure of the French Republic) making apparently successful advances to Edward VII. A year later, in 1904, these advances led to the signing of the Entente Cordiale.

Above: the Kaiser visits Tangier in March 1905 and begins the first Moroccan crisis. William regarded his visit as an act of personal Heroism. He wrote to Bülow, the German chancellor: 'For your sake and because the Fatherland called, I landed and, in spite of the incapacity caused by my crippled left arm, mounted an unknown horse which came within a hair's breadth of costing me my life. I rode into the town between all the Spanish anarchists because you wanted me to and because your policy stood to benefit'.

and Russia. And within a few years these rivalries, too, were to have been resolved without war.

### German 'world policy'

The growth of tension between the two alliances which first became apparent during the first Moroccan crisis of 1905-6 was the result, not of the nature of the alliances themselves, but of the new course of German foreign policy, German *Weltpolitik*. *Weltpolitik* ('world policy') arose, in part, from Germany's consciousness of its own enormous strength. At the time of the Franco-Prussian War, Germany had been only marginally superior to France in the size of its population and economic production. For the remainder of the nineteenth century, however, Germany's birth rate was the highest in Europe while France's was the lowest, and the German economy expanded at almost twice the rate of the French.

At the end of the century Germany towered, both militarily and economically,



### THE MATCH-MAKER MALGRE ELLE.

Mlle. La France (aside). "IF SHE'S GOING TO GLARE AT US LIKE THAT, IT ALMOST LOOKS AS IF WE MIGHT HAVE TO BE REGULARLY ENGAGED."

Above: German hostility to the Entente Cordiale between John Bull and 'Mademoiselle La France'. The Entente began as a colonial understanding between France and Britain. Germany's attempt to destroy that understanding during the First Moroccan Crisis (1905-6) turned it instead into a defensive coalition directed against Germany.

over every other state in the continent of Europe. *Weltpolitik* was partly an expression of this strength. In part also, it was simply one expression of the imperialist mood common to other European powers. Imperialism, in both France and Britain, became a popular movement only in the closing years of the nineteenth century, after the French and British Empires were virtually complete. World policy emerged in Germany at almost exactly the same moment. Its first acts were the seizure of the Chinese port of Kiaochow in 1897, and the decision by the German parliament (the Reichstag) a year later to build a new German battle fleet.

*Weltpolitik* reversed the assumptions on which Bismarck's foreign policy had been based. Germany was no longer 'a satiated

power', content with its position in Europe. It aspired, instead, to become a world power, with world ambitions. 'The German Empire', declared the Kaiser optimistically, 'has become a world empire'. By the time that Germany began to demand a place in the sun, however, almost all the available places had been taken. Had the nineteenth-century scramble for Africa been followed, as many European statesmen expected, by a twentieth-century scramble for China, Germany might still have been able to satisfy its imperial ambitions. But it was not to be.

#### 'The general purposes of German greatness'

Largely because of the lack of outlets for its imperial ambitions, *Weltpolitik* assumed a peculiarly restless character, undecided on which area of the world to focus its ambitions. Even the purpose of the new German navy was never made quite clear. Bethmann-Hollweg, Germany's chancellor on the outbreak of war, said vaguely that Germany needed the new navy 'for the general purposes of German greatness'. The Kaiser was almost equally vague. He told the king of Italy: 'All the years of my reign my colleagues, the monarchs of Europe, have paid little attention to what I have to say. Soon, with my great navy to endorse my words, they will be more respectful.'

The fact that the ambitions of *Weltpolitik* were so ill-defined only increased the extent to which Britain, France and Russia all came to feel threatened by them. Each power interpreted these ambitions with a different emphasis. Britain came to look on *Weltpolitik* primarily as a threat to British naval supremacy, Russia as a challenge to Russian influence in the Near East, France as a threat to the French position in the Mediterranean.

It was partly because of the lack of overseas outlets for German imperialism that, during the early years of the twentieth century, the ambitions of *Weltpolitik* turned increasingly towards the European continent. Among some sections of German opinion there was growing interest in the idea of a German *Mitteleuropa*, a new order in central Europe embracing not merely Germany and Austria-Hungary but also large areas of the Balkans and eastern Europe and even parts of Belgium. Though this idea became the official policy of the German government only after the outbreak of war in 1914, *Mitteleuropa* was the logical outcome of its vaguer pre-war ambitions.

#### 'A nightmare fear of coalitions'

The most curious characteristic of Germany's foreign policy during the decade before the First World War was the degree to which it combined an often arrogant assertion of German strength with a chronic feeling of insecurity. To a considerable degree this insecurity was a product of its ambitions: a fear that Germany's neigh-

bours were jealous of its growing strength, and might conspire to deny it the world power status which was its by right. Germany's insecurity showed itself, for example, in a fear that England might attempt the destruction of the new German fleet before it had grown large enough to challenge the supremacy of the Royal Navy. This fear, though greatly exaggerated, was not entirely without foundation. Sir John Fisher, the volatile First Lord of the Admiralty, suggested just such a scheme to Edward VII in 1904. The king was horrified. 'Good God, Fisher', he replied, 'you must be mad.'

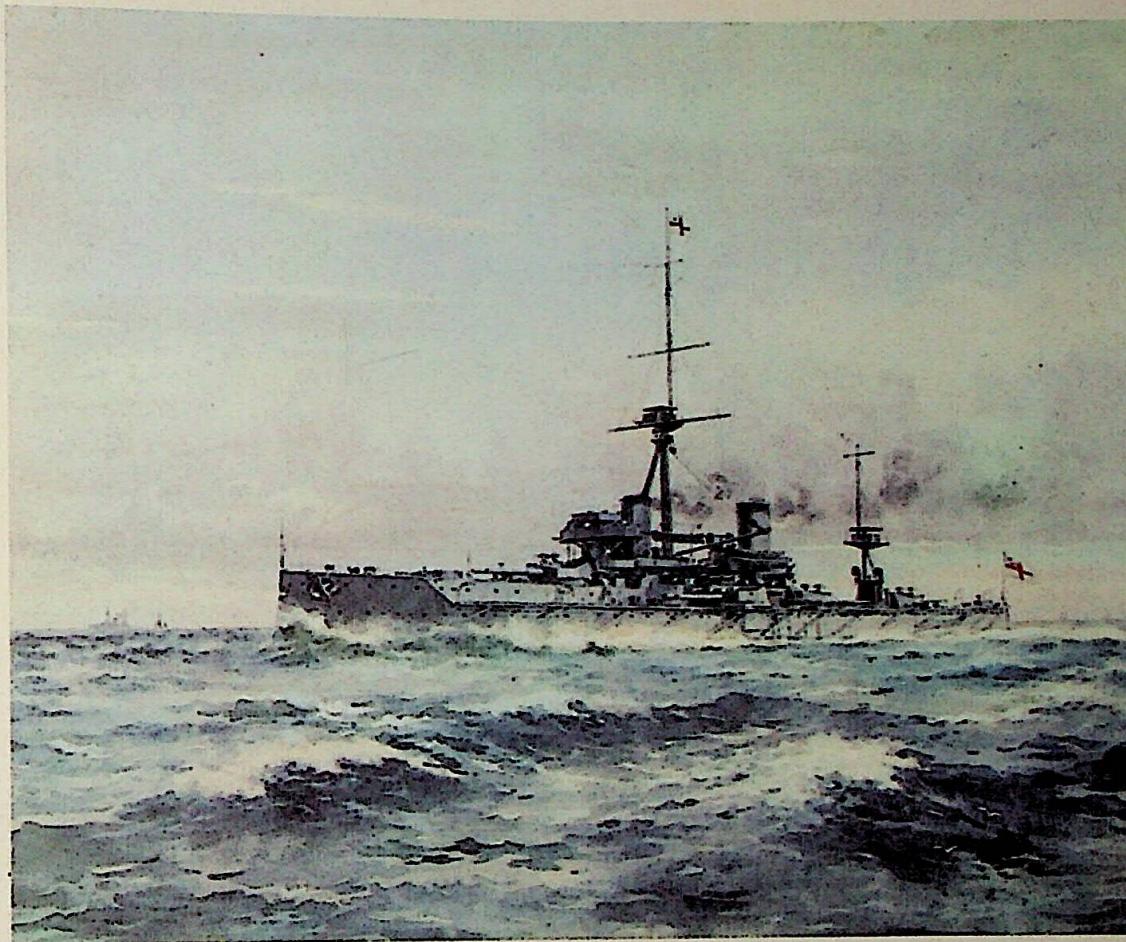
Insecurity was a consequence also of Germany's geographic position in the heart of Europe which forced it, unlike its two main continental rivals, France and Russia, to face the possibility of war on two fronts. Bismarck himself confessed that he suffered throughout his career from 'a nightmare fear of coalitions'. Time and time again in the years before the First World War, German statesmen showed that they could feel secure only in a world in which Germany's neighbours were at odds with one another. Much of the confidence felt by the Kaiser and his ministers at the turn of the twentieth century derived from the deep hostility (which Germany was at pains to encourage) between both England and France and England and Russia. It was the violent German reaction to the relaxation of this hostility with the signing of the Entente Cordiale in 1904 which began the decade of tension in European affairs which was to culminate in the First World War.

## The Entente Cordiale

The Entente Cordiale has come to seem a much more romantic agreement than it appeared to be to the statesmen who concluded it. President Auriol of France claimed, on its fiftieth anniversary, that 'the convention of 8 April 1904 embodied the agreement of our two peoples on the necessity of safeguarding the spiritual values of which we were the common trustees'. The interpretation given on the same occasion by the British foreign secretary, Sir Anthony Eden, was less romantic but more accurate. He told the House of Commons:

'At the time when it was concluded the Entente Cordiale did not represent some great surge of public opinion on either side of the Channel. It was in fact an instrument of political policy at the time, calculated to attempt to remove the differences which had long complicated Anglo-French relations in Egypt and Morocco.'

The solution to these differences was a somewhat unscrupulous arrangement, characteristic of the diplomacy of imperialism. England and France signed a public undertaking to respect the integrity of both Egypt and Morocco. Secretly, they simply



agreed to take them over: Egypt was to go to Britain, Morocco to France.

In itself, the Entente Cordiale did nothing to make war between the two European alliances more likely than before. Nor did it give any indication that England was any readier than before to take part in a continental war. What made the Entente Cordiale a major turning point in international relations was, quite simply, the German reaction to it. The sight of Germany's neighbours settling differences which the German Foreign Office had assumed to be permanent immediately revived in German statesmen their nightmare fear of hostile coalitions. Once the agreement was signed, Germany was determined to demonstrate publicly that it was worthless. Its attempt to do so provoked the first Moroccan crisis, the first in the series of European crises which characterised the decade before the outbreak of war in 1914.

### The first Moroccan crisis

The German government calculated that if it were to provoke a crisis with France over Morocco, Russia would be unable (because of its involvement in a war with Japan) and Britain unwilling, to offer France effective support. At one stroke, therefore, Germany would demonstrate the ineffectiveness of both the Dual Alliance and the Entente Cordiale. Germany might then be able to draw France into dependence on it and transform the European balance of power dramatically in its favour.

*Above: H.M.S. Dreadnought, laid down in Portsmouth dockyard in 1905 on the hundredth anniversary of the battle of Trafalgar: a painting by Frank Wood. Her launching in 1906 introduced a new word into the English language and began a new phase in the naval arms-race. Pre-dreadnought battleships became known in the German navy as fünf-minuten ships: five minutes being considered the limit of their survival in an engagement with a dreadnought. (National Maritime Museum, Greenwich.)*

The Moroccan crisis began with the Kaiser's visit to Tangier in the spring of 1905. At Tangier he declared that Germany regarded the sultan as the ruler of a free and independent state: a clear warning that Germany would not tolerate a French protectorate. The significance of his visit was summed up by the Moroccan grand vizir in a particularly picturesque metaphor. 'Whilst in the act of ravishing Morocco', he declared, 'France has received a tremendous kick in the behind from the Emperor William'.

Supported by Germany, the sultan now demanded an international conference to discuss Moroccan affairs. Simultaneously, Germany began a war of nerves directed against France. Rouvier, the weak and inexperienced French prime minister, soon had visions of a second Franco-Prussian War, followed by a second Paris Commune. By the summer of 1905, his nerve had given

way. As a peace-offering to Germany he forced the resignation of his foreign minister, Delcassé, the French architect of the Entente Cordiale. Germany's failure at this time to exploit the spectacular success of its war of nerves was one of the greatest missed opportunities in the history of German diplomacy.

For the first time since the Franco-Prussian War, a French prime minister appeared ready, and even anxious, to co-operate with Germany. Rouvier offered Germany compensation in the Congo for French supremacy in Morocco, as well as co-operation in a variety of other fields. Had Germany accepted these terms, France might well have been drawn into a policy of continuing co-operation with Germany, so shifting the balance of power decisively in Germany's favour.

The German government, however, found itself trapped by its own propaganda. Having publicly demanded an international conference and having posed as the defender of Moroccan independence, it felt unable to

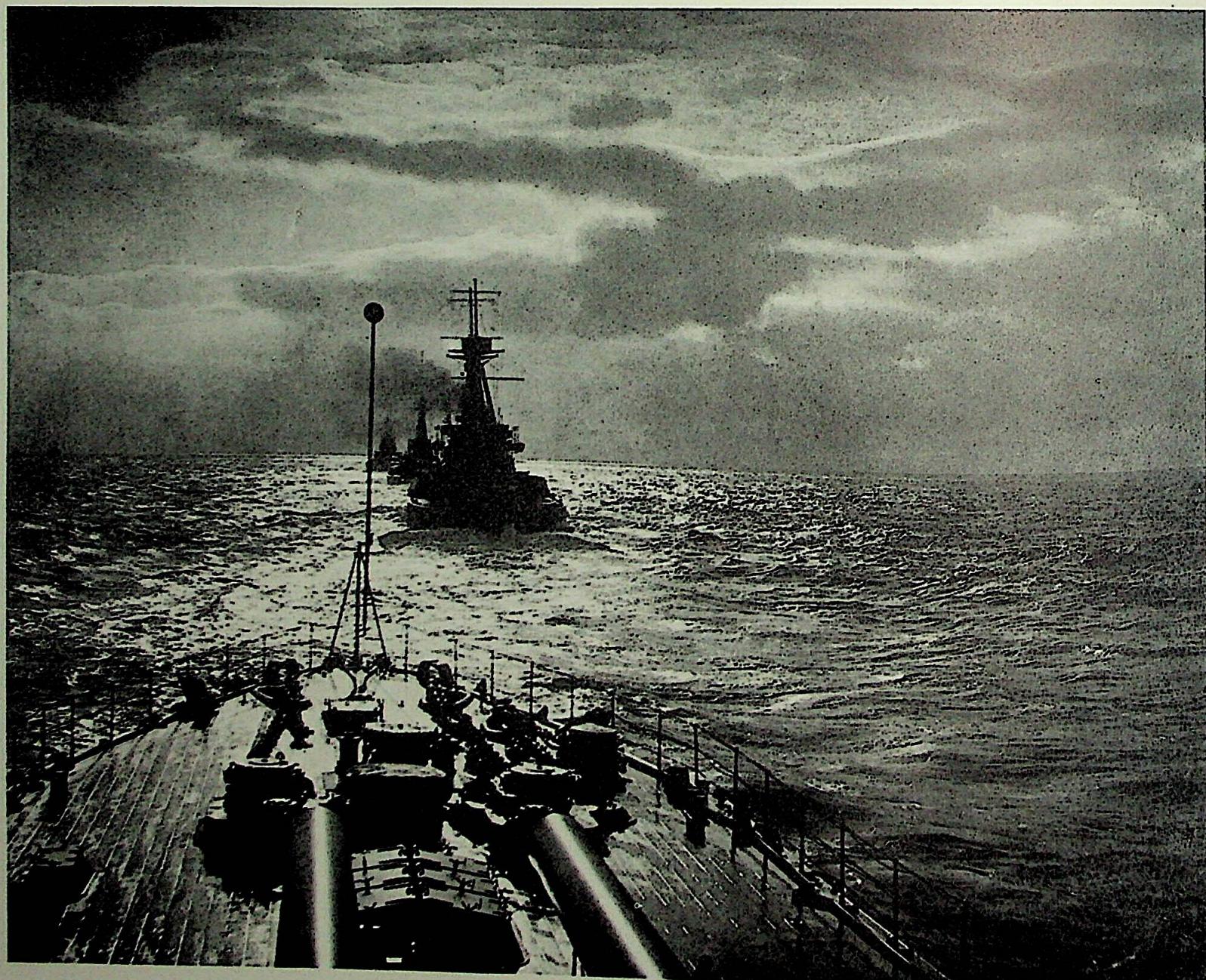
back down and reach an agreement with France. By its inflexibility Germany alienated those Frenchmen most anxious for agreement with it. Even Rouvier gradually recovered his spirits. In November he told one of his advisers: 'If Berlin thinks it can intimidate me, it has made a mistake. Henceforth I shall make no further concessions, come what may.'

#### The transformation of the Entente

The German war of nerves against France strengthened the suspicions aroused in Britain by the building of the new German fleet. At the beginning of the crisis the British government denounced the attitude of Germany as 'most unreasonable' and offered France 'all the support in its power'. Sir John Fisher begged the Foreign Office to go further and 'send a telegram to Paris that the English and French fleets are one'. At the end of 1905 British and French service chiefs began secret talks about co-operation in a war with Germany. By its own policy,

therefore, the German government had transformed the character of the Entente Cordiale. What had begun as a settlement of colonial differences had now become a defensive coalition against Germany, regarded by both Britain and France as essential to their own security.

The new significance of the Entente Cordiale was apparent as soon as the international conference on Morocco met at Algeciras in January, 1906. Throughout the conference France depended on British support. Grey, the British foreign secretary, dared not refuse that support for fear of damaging the Entente Cordiale. Even when he thought the French unreasonable and believed they should make concessions towards Germany, he still maintained that 'We can't press our advice on them to the point of breaking up the Entente'. The conference itself ended in a major defeat for German diplomacy. Germany had been convinced that France would find itself almost isolated at Algeciras, and that neither



Right: 'How can we manage to shake hands?' Naval rivalry prevents Britain and Germany from settling their differences: a German cartoon of 1912. Most people in Britain believed that Germany had no need for a large navy. For Britain, said Winston Churchill, a great fleet was a necessity; for Germany it was 'more in the nature of a luxury'.

Below left: ships of the Grand Fleet steaming in line ahead. In 1914 Britannia still ruled the waves but was insecure beneath them. During the war the Grand Fleet dared not venture out into the North Sea without an escort of a hundred destroyers to protect it from submarine attack. (Imperial War Museum, London.)

Britain nor Russia would offer it effective support. In the event it was Germany which was almost isolated, supported only by Austria-Hungary and Morocco.

The first Moroccan crisis convinced Grey of the wisdom of turning the Entente with France into a Triple Entente with both France and Russia. He wrote during the Algeciras conference: 'An Entente between Russia, France, and ourselves would be absolutely secure. If it were necessary to check Germany it could then be done.' As soon as the conference was over, he began the negotiations, which led eventually to the Anglo-Russian agreement of August 1907, and the creation of the Triple Entente. Even now, Grey remained genuinely anxious to reduce the tension between Britain and Germany. Both he and his Foreign Office advisers, however, were constantly afraid of taking any initiative to improve relations with Germany which might endanger the Triple Entente with France and Russia on which, they believed, British security depended. 'If we sacrifice the other powers to Germany', Grey believed, 'we shall eventually be attacked.'

### The growth of tension in the Balkans

One of the unforeseen consequences of the first Moroccan crisis was its effect on Germany's relations with Austria-Hungary. Only a few years earlier, relations between the two countries had been rather distant. At Algeciras, however, Austria-Hungary suddenly emerged as Germany's only reliable ally. In a Europe in which the other three great powers seemed to be uniting against it Germany now regarded the alliance with Austria as vital for its own security. Unhappily for the peace of Europe, the moment at which Germany found itself reduced to dependence on the Austrian alliance coincided almost exactly with the moment chosen by Austria to resume a forward policy in the Balkans.

The new course in Austrian foreign policy was partly the result of the rise of new men to power. In the autumn of 1906 Aehren-



thal became Austrian foreign minister and Conrad chief of staff. Their predecessors had been cautious men, anxious to do nothing to disturb the understanding with Russia in the Balkans. Aehrenthal and Conrad were arrogant, aggressive and ambitious, eager to restore the prestige of the Austrian Empire by a dramatic success in the Balkans.

At a deeper level, however, Aehrenthal's foreign policy was a response to the internal tensions of the Austrian Empire. Like Turkey, Austria had to face the enormous problems involved in holding together a multinational empire beset by the growing nationalism of its subject peoples. Many European statesmen believed these problems to be insoluble, and concluded that the Austrian, like the Turkish, Empire was doomed to disintegration.

The most restive nationality within the Austrian Empire were the South Slavs. Many were attracted by the prospect of joining with their fellow Slavs in the independent kingdom of Serbia and in the provinces of Bosnia-Herzegovina (still a part of the Turkish Empire though under Austrian administration) to form a united South Slav state. Serbia, which openly considered itself the nucleus of this future South

Slav state, thus came to be considered by Austrian statesmen as a threat to the continued existence of Austria-Hungary. Austria-Hungary would be secure, Aehrenthal believed, 'only when we decide to grasp the nettle firmly and make a final end to the pan-Slav dream'. And for both Aehrenthal and Conrad the only 'final end to the pan-Slav dream' was the complete destruction of the kingdom of Serbia.

### The Bosnian crisis

The signal for the revival of tension in the Balkans was the Young Turk revolution at Constantinople in the summer of 1908. The Turks, now fired, like their Balkan subjects, with a new spirit of nationalism, seemed likely to reclaim full sovereignty over the provinces of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Aehrenthal's reply was to announce the annexation of these provinces by the Austrian Empire. By bringing another million Slavs under Austrian rule, he believed that he had struck a first blow against South Slav dreams of a united South Slav state. So too did the Serbs. Serbia mobilised its forces and appealed for Russian support. Russia, as the largest of the Slav nations considered itself the protector of the Balkan Slavs, and demanded that the question of Bosnia-

Herzegovina be submitted to an international conference.

Aehrenthal had planned the annexation without giving any warning to Berlin. He had acted, however, in the conviction that, once the crisis had begun, Germany dare not risk the defeat of its only reliable ally by denying it German support. In the event, Germany promised support, not merely over the annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina, but in whatever action Austria thought fit to deal with Serbia. The German chancellor wrote to Aehrenthal a fortnight after the annexation,

'I know you doubt whether the present nasty state of affairs in Serbia can be allowed to go on indefinitely. I trust your judgement and shall regard whatever decision you come to as appropriate to the circumstances.'

*Below: gunboat diplomacy. The German gunboat Berlin steams into the Moroccan port of Agadir to relieve the Panther. The pretext for the Panther's arrival had been the need to rescue German subjects 'endangered' by a Moroccan rising. When a German subject finally arrived at Agadir to be rescued, however, he had to spend a day gesticulating on the beach before being noticed by the Panther's crew.*

After six months of tension it was Germany which brought the crisis to an end. In March 1909 it presented Russia with what amounted to an ultimatum demanding that it recognise the annexation. With its army still unprepared for European war, Russia was forced to give way. Serbia, now deprived of Russian support, had no option but to follow suit. Germany, boasted the Kaiser, had stood by its ally like a knight 'in shining armour'.

'Here', wrote the Austrian minister, in the Serbian capital soon after the crisis had ended, 'all think of revenge, which is only to be carried out with the help of the Russians'. Russia was unlikely to desert the Serbs a second time as it had done in 1909. Having been humiliated once by Germany, it was unwilling to risk humiliation again. As soon as the crisis was over, Russia began a large-scale reconstruction of its armed forces. The settlement of the Bosnian crisis had only postponed a final show-down between Serbia and Austria-Hungary. When that show-down came, it was already clear what Germany's policy would be. It was Germany's willingness, and even eagerness, to underwrite Austrian action against Serbia—already clearly demonstrated in the crisis of 1908–9—which, in August 1914, was to be the immediate cause of the First World War.

## The naval arms-race

During the last five years before the outbreak of war two sources of European tension dominated all the rest: the Balkan rivalry between Austria and Serbia (and Serbia's protector, Russia), and the naval rivalry between Britain and Germany. Naval rivalry, unlike Balkan rivalry, did not cause a European war, but it did much to explain British participation in it.

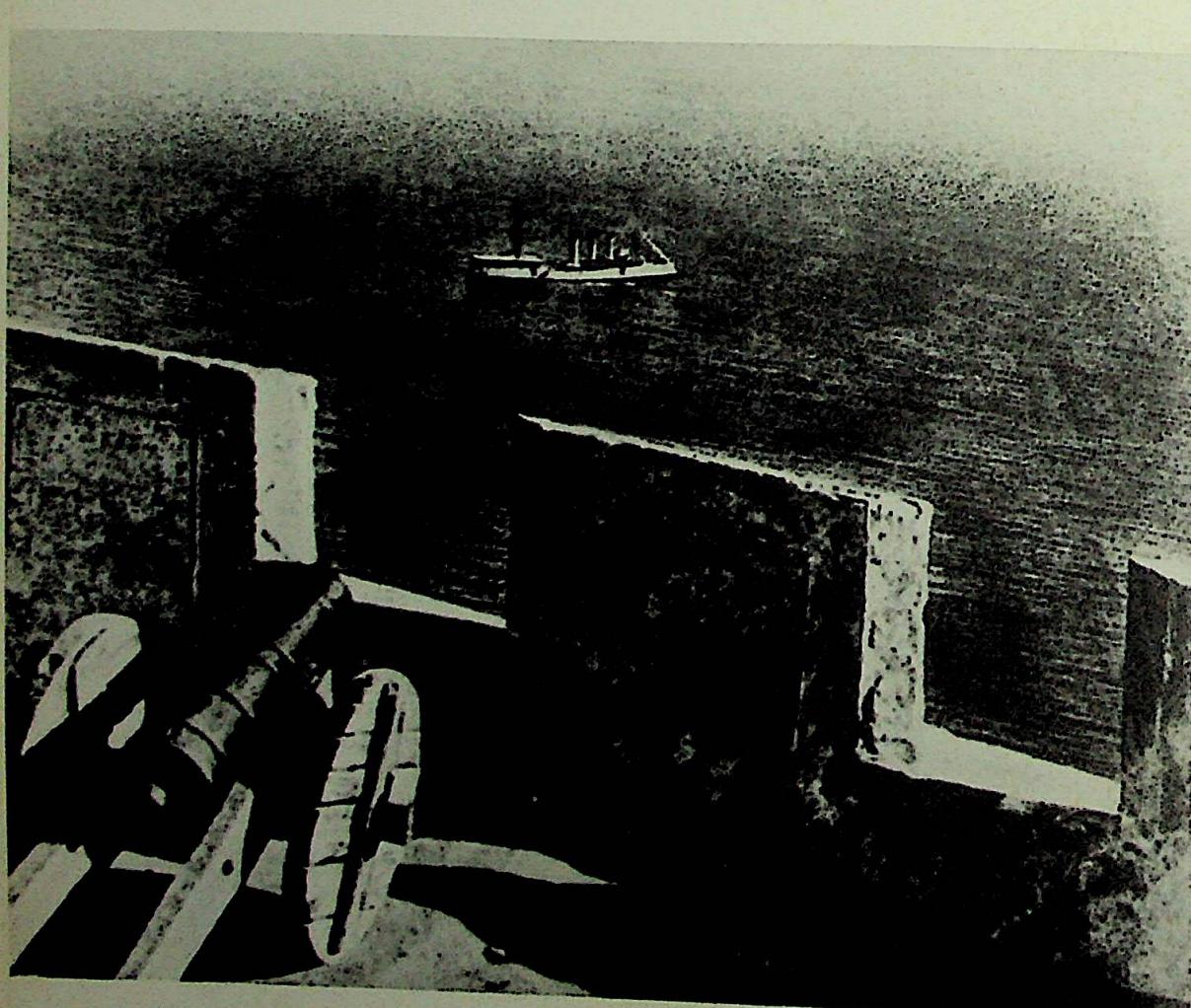
Until the first Moroccan crisis the new German battle fleet had posed only a symbolic threat to British naval supremacy. The new fleet had succeeded in making Britain suspicious but not really apprehensive. The sheer size of the Royal Navy made it impossible, for the foreseeable future, to envisage any real rival to it. Or so it seemed until the launching of the new British battleship *Dreadnought* in 1906. By its size and firepower the *Dreadnought* made all other battleships obsolete. With ten twelve-inch guns, each with a range of more than eight miles, it was more than a match for any two of its predecessors. Overnight the Royal Navy, like every other navy in the world, discovered that it was out of date.

The launching of the *Dreadnought* gave a new and more dangerous dimension to naval rivalry between Britain and Germany. The discovery by the British public that British naval supremacy was no longer secure was a traumatic experience. Almost inevitably, rumours spread that Germany was planning a secret acceleration of its naval programme which, within a few years, would give it more dreadnoughts than the Royal Navy. By the final stages of the Bosnian crisis in the spring of 1909 British public opinion had been roused to a state of almost frenzied agitation. Asquith's government, which had originally intended to build only four dreadnoughts during the next year, was assailed by the slogan 'We want eight and we won't wait' and capitulated to it.

Talks between Britain and Germany on methods of slowing down the naval arms race began in August 1909, and continued intermittently for two years. The stumbling block throughout the negotiations was Germany's insistence that a naval agreement be accompanied by a political agreement. This was to bind each power to observe 'a benevolent neutrality' if the other went to war with other powers. To Britain it seemed increasingly clear that Germany's real aim in the negotiations was to destroy the Triple Entente. The slim prospect of a compromise agreement that still remained after nearly two years' negotiation was destroyed altogether by Germany's action in provoking the Agadir crisis in the summer of 1911.

## Gunboat diplomacy

Early in 1911 the Sultan of Morocco was forced to appeal for French troops in order



to protect himself against a rebellion by his subjects. It soon became clear that a French protectorate would not be long delayed. Kiderlen, the German foreign minister, concluded that some dramatic gesture was necessary to make France offer Germany compensation for its absorption of Morocco. In his own words: 'It is necessary to thump the table, but the only object is to make the French negotiate.' Kiderlen's method of thumping the table was to send a gunboat to the Moroccan port of Agadir, allegedly for the protection of German citizens whose lives might be endangered by the Moroccan rising. Unfortunately, as A. J. P. Taylor has observed, the nearest German was at the more northerly port of Mogador. He was therefore ordered to proceed to Agadir at once, in order to put himself in danger and so justify the sending of a gunboat. The crisis was ended in November 1911 by a compromise. Germany agreed to recognise a French protectorate in Morocco, and received a large slice of the French Congo in exchange.

Public reaction to this agreement was striking evidence of the serious worsening in Franco-German relations since the first Moroccan crisis of 1905. In 1905 most Germans had been indifferent to Morocco, and most Frenchmen had been in favour of making concessions to Germany. In 1911, however, public opinion in both France and Germany was indignant at the conclusion of a compromise settlement. In Germany the minister of colonies resigned over the agreement, and attacks on it were ostentatiously applauded by the Crown Prince. To his fury the Kaiser found himself accused of loss of nerve for having let the settlement go through. In France public hostility to the treaty led to the overthrow of the government which had concluded it and to the rise to power, first as prime minister and then as president, of Raymond Poincaré, one of the leading advocates of a tough policy towards Germany.

The Agadir crisis was interpreted in Britain, like the first Moroccan crisis in 1905, as yet another German attempt to destroy the Entente Cordiale by a war of nerves against France. At the height of the crisis British and French chiefs of staff discussed, for the first time, the transfer of British troops to France to meet a German attack. At the same time Lloyd George, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, hitherto considered the most pro-German member of Asquith's cabinet, delivered the strongest public warning to Germany so far given by a British statesman. The British government, he said, would prefer war to a peace achieved 'by allowing Britain to be treated as if she were of no account in the cabinet of nations'. The British public believed that Germany had intended to make war on France, and that Lloyd George's warning had stopped the German army in its tracks. The inevitable result of the passions aroused

by the Agadir crisis was an intensification of Anglo-German naval rivalry. In Germany Tirpitz, the architect of the new German battle fleet, was able to use the crisis to push through a new German navy law. Britain replied with an enlarged naval programme of her own, and a naval agreement with France.

### The Balkan wars

The Agadir crisis led, by a roundabout route, to war in the Balkans. Italy took advantage of the crisis to begin an attack on Libya, now all that remained of the former Turkish empire on the north coast of Africa. In itself the Italian conquest of Libya was only a minor episode in the history of European imperialism. But, by revealing the unexpected extent of Turkey's military vulnerability, it provided a powerful stimulus to the territorial ambitions of the Balkan

*Below: Britain's future leaders in the two World Wars leaving the Commons together on Budget Day, 1910. 'Sometimes when I see Winston making these speeches', said Lloyd George in 1909, 'I get a flash of jealousy and I have to say to myself, "Don't be a fool. What's the use of getting jealous with Winston?"' Despite their obvious ability, however, both men were widely distrusted. 'I am rarely fond of him', Asquith said of Churchill in 1914, 'but I regard his future with many misgivings . . . He will never get to the top in English politics with all his wonderful gifts; to speak with the tongue of men and angels, and to spend laborious days and nights in administration, is no good if a man does not inspire trust'.*



states, anxious to divide between them what remained of Turkey's European Empire. Bulgaria, Greece, and Serbia temporarily set aside their differences, formed the Balkan League, and declared war on Turkey in October 1912. The extent of their successes took the whole of Europe by surprise. After an illness lasting 150 years, European Turkey, the 'Sick man of Europe', suddenly expired.

The First Balkan War, however, only strengthened the rivalries among the Balkan states themselves. It was followed in 1913 by a Second Balkan War in which the victors of the first fell out among themselves. In this war Serbia and Greece, the protégés of Russia, defeated Bulgaria, the protégé of Austria. Berchtold, who had succeeded Aehrenthal as Austrian foreign minister, declared at the beginning of the war: 'In view of the open hostility of Serbia towards us, a further material and moral strengthening of Serbia at the expense of Bulgaria would be absolutely contrary to our interests'. Yet this was precisely what the Second Balkan War achieved. It thus strengthened still further Austria's determination to put an end to the Serbian menace. Once again, the Kaiser reaffirmed Germany's readiness to support whatever action against Serbia Austria thought necessary. 'You can be certain', he told Berchtold, 'that I stand behind you, ready to draw sword whenever your action makes it necessary'.

### The Sarajevo crisis

Bismarck had predicted, long ago, that the immediate cause of the next European war would be 'some damned foolish thing in the Balkans'. His prophecy was fulfilled by the murder of the Archduke Francis Ferdinand at the Bosnian capital of Sarajevo on 28 June, 1914. Francis Ferdinand had chosen as the date for his visit St Vitus' Day, the Serbian national festival. The effect on Serbian opinion has been compared to the likely effect in Ireland of a visit to Dublin on St Patrick's Day by a British monarch at the height of the Irish troubles. The Archduke and his wife only narrowly escaped a bomb attack soon after their arrival in Sarajevo. They were killed early in the afternoon while on their way to visit an officer wounded during the first assassination attempt a few hours earlier. The assassin, Gavrilo Princip, was a nineteen-year-old Bosnian, the first student revolutionary to change the course of European history.

Though Princip was an Austrian subject, the assassination had been planned in Serbia by a Serbian terrorist organisation, the 'Union of Death' (better known as the 'Black Hand') dedicated, as its name implies, to achieving the union of all South Slavs under the Serbian crown. Francis Ferdinand was selected as its victim, not merely because he was the heir to the throne of Austria-

Hungary, but also, paradoxically, because he stood for a policy of conciliation towards the South Slavs of the Austrian Empire. He intended, once he became emperor, to offer the South Slavs an autonomy similar to that already enjoyed by the Magyars. Such a scheme was probably impracticable. The 'Black Hand', however, feared that it might succeed. If it did, it would end all hope of a united South Slav state. Francis Ferdinand was killed because, in his assassin's words, 'as future sovereign he would have prevented our union and carried out certain reforms which would have been clearly against our interests'.

Throughout the Sarajevo crisis the Austrian government possessed no proof whatever of Serbian complicity in the assassination. Even the existence of the 'Black Hand' was not discovered until much later. Conrad, none the less, insisted that the time had come for 'the Serbian nest of vipers' to be finally destroyed. Berchtold, after some hesitation, rallied to his view. The final decision of peace or war, however, rested

not with the Austrian, but with the German government. Even Conrad recognised that war with Serbia was out of the question unless Austria possessed a guarantee of German support.

Germany, however, not merely promised Austria support, but urged it to lose no time in launching an attack. 'The Serbs', wrote the Kaiser, 'must be wiped out and quickly too'. Germany believed that Austria's survival as a great power was essential to its own security: and, in the opinion of both the Kaiser and his government, Austria could not remain a great power unless it dealt with Serbia. 'The maintenance of Austria, and in fact of the most powerful Austria possible', said Jagow, the foreign minister, 'is a necessity for us'.

But Germany's belligerence was not solely dictated by concern for Austria-Hungary. Each succeeding crisis had strengthened the feeling in Berlin—as in other European capitals—that war between the two alliances was, sooner or later, inevitable. In the summer of 1914, German generals were



agreed that now was the time to fight. 'Any delay', argued Moltke, 'means a worsening in our chances'. The alacrity with which the German government adopted the aim of a German *Mitteleuropa* once the war had started suggests, however, that Germany was not simply thinking in terms of a preventive war. Only through war could the frustrated ambitions of *Weltpolitik* hope to find fulfilment. The German writer, Plehn, wrote in 1913: 'It is an almost universal belief throughout the country that we shall only win our freedom to participate in world politics through a major European war.' Germany's ambitions did not cause the Sarajevo crisis, but once the crisis had arisen they inevitably conditioned its response to it.

Both Austria and Germany were careful to throw a smoke screen over their intentions. Early in July the Kaiser sent birthday greetings to the king of Serbia and left for his annual cruise off Scandinavia in his steam yacht. For almost a month after the assassination most European statesmen

assumed that the crisis between Austria and Serbia would be settled without war. By mid-July the crisis was no longer headline news. English newspaper readers were more concerned with events in Ireland and French newspaper readers with the trial of a former prime minister's wife, accused of shooting a newspaper editor who had threatened to publish her husband's correspondence with his mistress. As late as 23 July, Lloyd George was confidently forecasting both 'substantial economies' in naval expenditure and a world-wide reaction against the growth of armaments. He told the House of Commons:

'I cannot help thinking that civilisation which is able to deal with disputes among individuals and small communities at home, and is able to regulate these by means of some sane and well-ordered arbitrament should be able to extend its operations to the larger sphere of disputes between states.'

### The Austrian ultimatum

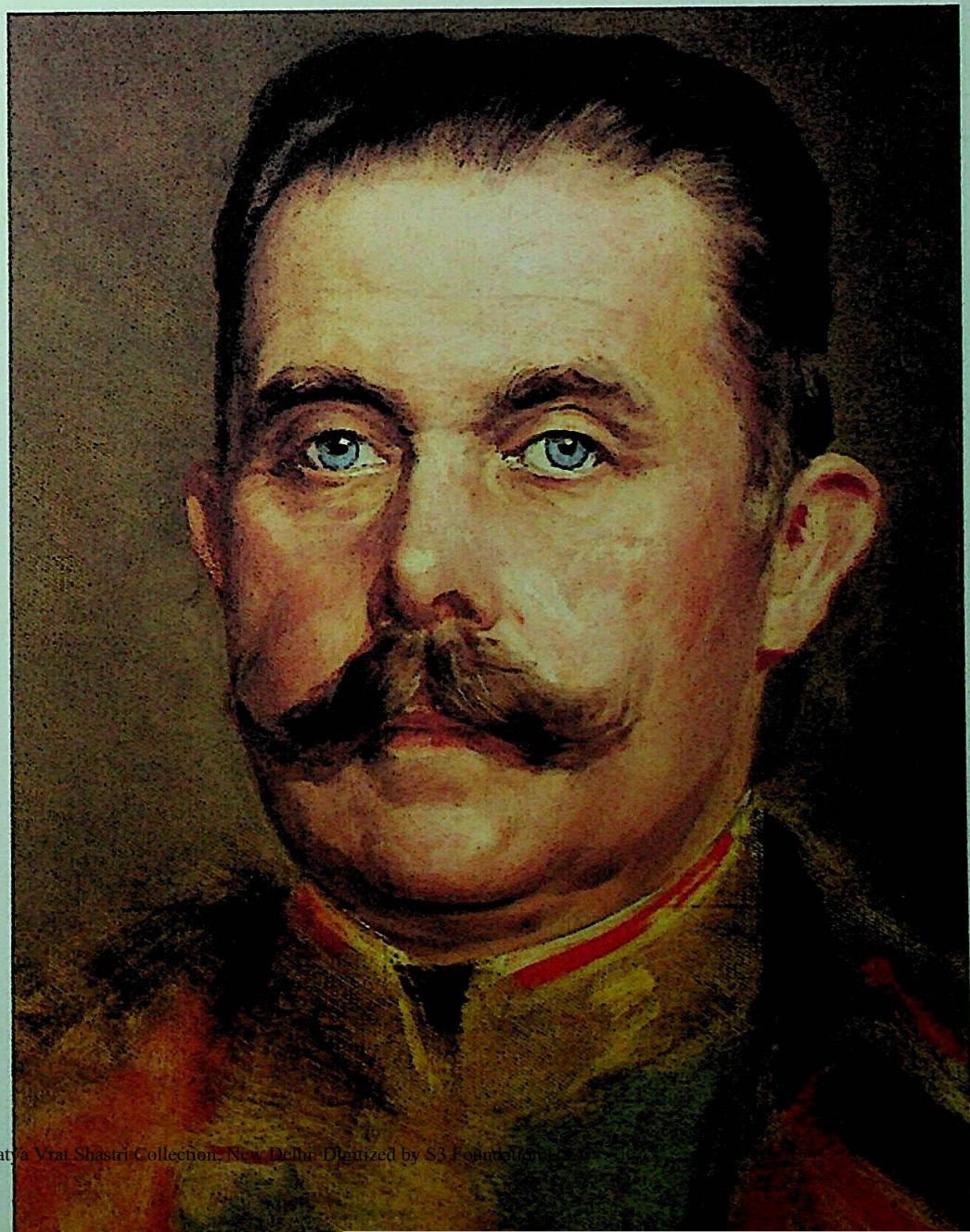
In the evening of 23 July, while Lloyd George was still speaking to the Commons, Austria delivered an ultimatum to Serbia, based on an assumption of Serbian responsibility for the assassination, and making demands which were intended to be unacceptable. Serbia's refusal of these demands was intended to provide a pretext for war. To Austria's astonishment—and embarrassment—Serbia accepted, either outright or with reservations, all but one of Austria's demands. 'A great moral victory for Vienna!', wrote the Kaiser, when he learned of the reply, 'but with it every reason for war drops away.'

#### *The assassin and his victim.*

*Below: Archduke Francis Ferdinand, the heir to the Austrian Empire.*  
*(Heeresgeschichtliches Museum, Vienna.)*  
*Below left: his assassin, Gavrilo Princip, being manhandled after the assassination.*



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## THE ORIGINS OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR

1870-1	Franco-Prussian war
1873	League of the Three Emperors (Germany, Austria-Hungary, Russia)
1879	Austro-German alliance
1881	Alliance of the Three Emperors (lapsed 1887)
1882	Triple Alliance (Germany, Austria-Hungary, Italy)
1887	Russo-German re-insurance treaty (lapsed 1890)
1890	Bismarck falls from power
1891-4	Conclusion, by stages, of the Franco-Russian alliance
1897	The Balkans 'on ice'
1898	Germany decides to build a new battle fleet
1899-1902	Boer war
1901	Death of Queen Victoria. Accession of Edward VII
1902	Anglo-Japanese alliance
1904	Entente Cordiale
1904-5	Russo-Japanese war
1905-6	First Moroccan crisis
1906	Launching of the <i>Dreadnought</i>
1907	Anglo-Russian agreement completes the Triple Entente
1908	Young Turk revolution
	Asquith liberal prime minister
1908-9	Bosnian crisis
1910	Accession of George V
1911	Agadir crisis
1911-12	War in Libya between Italy and Turkey
1912	First Balkan war
1913	Second Balkan war
1914	Assassination of Archduke Francis Ferdinand (28 June)
	Austrian ultimatum to Serbia (23 July)
	Austria declares war on Serbia (28 July)
	Russia mobilises (30 July)
	Germany declares war on Russia (1 August)
	Germany declares war on France and invades Belgium (3 August)
	Britain declares war on Germany (4 August)

*Below: London goes joyfully to war. Its population was notorious for the enthusiasm with which it habitually greeted declarations of war. 'War or anything that leads to war', wrote Asquith, 'is always popular with the*

*London mob. You remember Sir Robert Walpole's remark "Now they are ringing their bells; in a few weeks they will be wringing their hands". How one loathes such levity'.*



Though the Kaiser was beginning to have second thoughts, however, the German government continued to press Austria for an immediate declaration of war in order to make mediation impossible. In response to German pressure Austria formally declared war on Serbia on 28 July, a fortnight earlier than it had intended. The Kaiser's view that war was now unnecessary was passed on to Vienna by the German Foreign Office only when it was too late. Bethmann-Hollweg, the German chancellor, had no intention of trying to avert a war. He recognised that an Austrian war with Serbia would mean a European war with France and Russia, but was confident of victory.

Bethmann-Hollweg, however, had counted on obtaining British neutrality. Only on 30 July, when he learned that British neutrality was not to be secured on the terms offered by Germany, did Bethmann-Hollweg at last make a serious attempt to restrain Austria. He urged Austria to halt its forces at Belgrade and agree to talks with Russia. By now, however, it was too late to hold Austria back. Nor was Germany speaking with a single voice. While Bethmann-Hollweg was counselling moderation, Moltke was telegraphing Conrad: 'Mobilise against Russia at once. Germany will follow suit'.

Even Bethmann-Hollweg's eleventh-hour attempt to hold Austria back was not wholly dictated by a desire to preserve the peace. He was also concerned—perhaps mainly concerned—to fix on Russia the responsibility for transforming a local war with Serbia into a continental war between the great powers of Europe. If Russia were the first to mobilise its forces for a continental war, Bethmann-Hollweg believed it would be possible for Germany to brand Russia as the aggressor.

### Russia mobilises

Russia went to war against Austria, as Austria went to war against Serbia, because it believed that its status as a great power left it no alternative. Just as Austria believed that it could not remain a great power without war with Serbia, so Russia believed that it could not remain a great power if it aban-

*Right: the young Adolf Hitler (ringed) listens to the proclamation of war in Munich on 2 August 1914. He wrote later of this moment in Mein Kampf: 'Now began for me, as for every German, the greatest and most unforgettable period of my life on earth. Compared with the events of that mighty struggle, all the past fell into empty oblivion. I think with pride and sorrow of those days, and back to the weeks at the beginning of our nation's heroic fight in which kind fortune allowed me to take part'. (Imperial War Museum, London.)*

doned Serbia. On 30 July Russia became, as Bethmann-Hollweg had hoped, the first of the great powers to order general mobilisation. This decision, however, reflected less a desire for war than a consciousness of its own military inferiority. Russia was well aware that its mobilisation would be much slower, and less efficient, than that of Germany. Unlike Germany, therefore, Russia could not take the risk of allowing its opponents to be the first to mobilise.

Once Russia had decided to mobilise, control of German policy passed from the statesmen to the soldiers. The only plan of campaign which the German high command possessed was that devised by General Schlieffen ten years before. The Schlieffen Plan assumed (wrongly as it turned out) that Germany's only chance of victory in a war on two fronts was to win a quick victory over France by a sweep through Belgium, before Russia was ready for war in the east. Once Russia had begun to mobilise, therefore, the Schlieffen Plan made it essential for war to begin without delay.

### Germany goes to war

On 31 July Germany issued an ultimatum to Russia to demobilise within twelve hours. When this was refused, Germany declared war on 1 August. Two days later, on 3 August, Germany declared war on France, using the trumped-up pretext of French violations of the German frontier. Britain's

last doubts about intervention were removed by the German ultimatum to Belgium, demanding free passage for an invasion of France. Britain replied with an ultimatum of her own, demanding German respect for Belgian neutrality. When Germany failed to reply, Britain entered the war at midnight on 4 August.

After forty-three years of peace the great powers of Europe went joyfully to war. Crowds in all the five main European capitals greeted the declaration of war with delirious enthusiasm. The social and political conflicts of the pre-war years seemed to be forgotten in the enthusiasm of the moment. In Germany the Kaiser told cheering crowds, 'I see no more parties, I see only Germans.' In France all parties buried their differences in the *Union Sacrée*. Even in Russia, the wave of strikes which had paralysed Russian industry in the spring and summer of 1914 ceased almost overnight. The Second International, which had sought to replace national rivalries by the international solidarity of the European working class, sank without a trace. Often, it was the young and idealistic who greeted war with the greatest enthusiasm. Peace had come to seem unheroic and they were bored by it, hoping to discover in war a sense of purpose that had been lacking before. All over Europe a generation echoed the words of the English poet, Rupert Brooke: 'Now God be thanked, Who has matched us with His hour.'



Above: Sir Edward Grey, British foreign secretary 1905-16. Grey followed the declaration of war with the famous prophecy: 'The lamps are going out all over Europe; we shall not see them lit again in our lifetime'. It was, as has been cruelly observed, the only memorable phrase of his life.





# The First World War

*The peoples of Europe go joyfully to war; the optimism of August 1914 disappears in a war of attrition; Russia becomes a communist state; the United States intervenes in Europe; after four years of war Europe feels that it has lost a generation.*

## Deadlock on land 1914-16

Almost no-one, in August 1914, had any idea of what war would be like. There had been moments in the decade before the war when at least some generals had had a premonition of what lay in store for them. Moltke had spoken in 1905 of 'a war that, even should we be victorious, will push our people to the limits of exhaustion'. Joffre, the French commander-in-chief, had spoken in 1912 of a war which might be 'of indefinite duration'. These fears seemed to be forgotten in August 1914. No country possessed plans for a war of more than a few months. Most generals on both sides thought such plans unnecessary. 'You will be home', the Kaiser told the German army, 'before the leaves have fallen from the trees'. Only Kitchener, recalled to become secretary

of state for war on the day that Britain entered the conflict, foresaw a war which would involve millions of men and take years to decide.

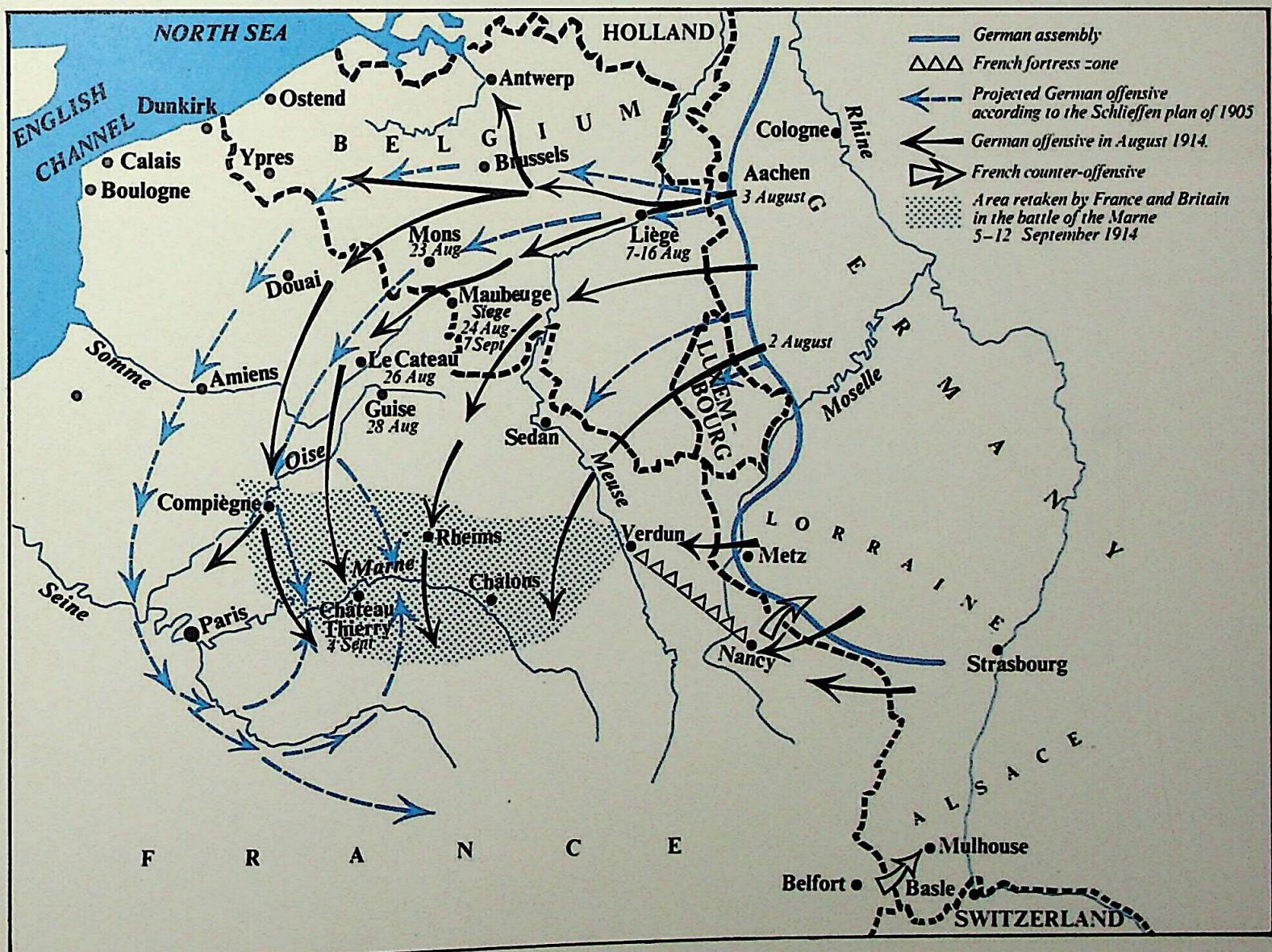
### The miracle of the Marne

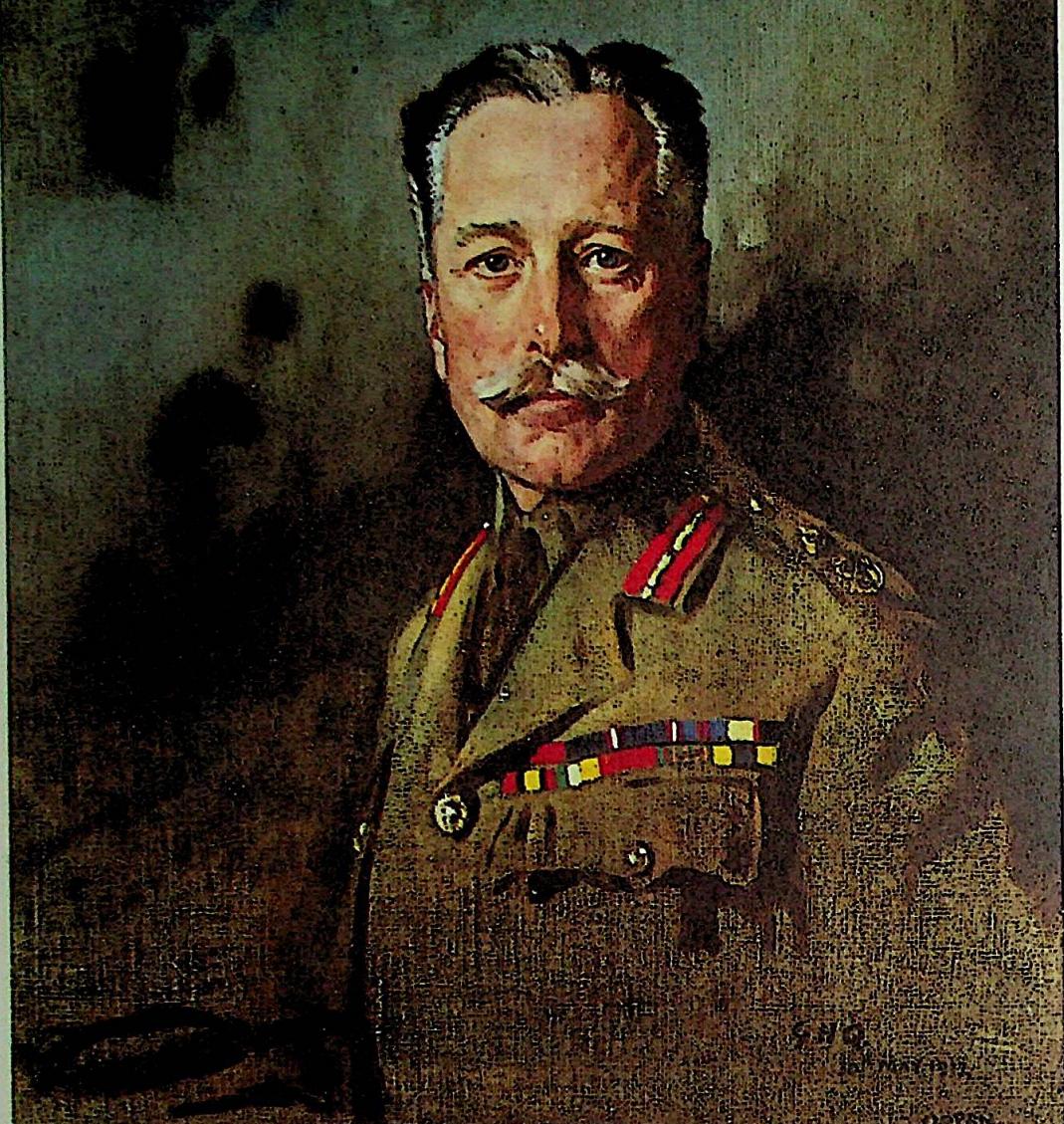
And yet, on the Western Front at least, the war was almost won and lost within the space of one campaign. In both 1870 and 1940 the French were routed by the Germans in six weeks. The same thing very nearly happened in 1914. Though Joffre knew of the Schlieffen plan, he did not take it seriously. While the Germans were struggling through Belgium, the French would pour across the frontier into the heart of Germany. The whole French army in August 1914 shared Joffre's sublime confidence in attack. While the British and Germans tried to make themselves incon-

*Above: French troops leave Paris for the Front in August 1914. General de Gaulle wrote later of the disillusion which followed: 'The men who in August 1914 found themselves subjected to a hail of bullets and the blast of big shells suffered a kind of moral annihilation. All the resolution, illusions and bravery with which they had armed themselves crumpled up in a twinkling, leaving them terrified among the screams of the wounded and the dead. . . . Later on the fresh drafts did not have to face the horrors of battle in such a brutal manner. But although people grew used to these things by degrees during four years of war, it must not be forgotten what an ordeal they were at the beginning.'*

Right: the Eastern Front. Tsar Nicholas II blesses his troops, but to no avail. Of the 15½ million Russian soldiers mobilised during the war perhaps 8 million were killed, captured or wounded.

Below: the Schlieffen plan. Note the failure in 1914 to follow Schlieffen's instructions to encircle Paris: a failure which allowed the Paris garrison to launch a brilliantly successful counter-attack on the Marne.

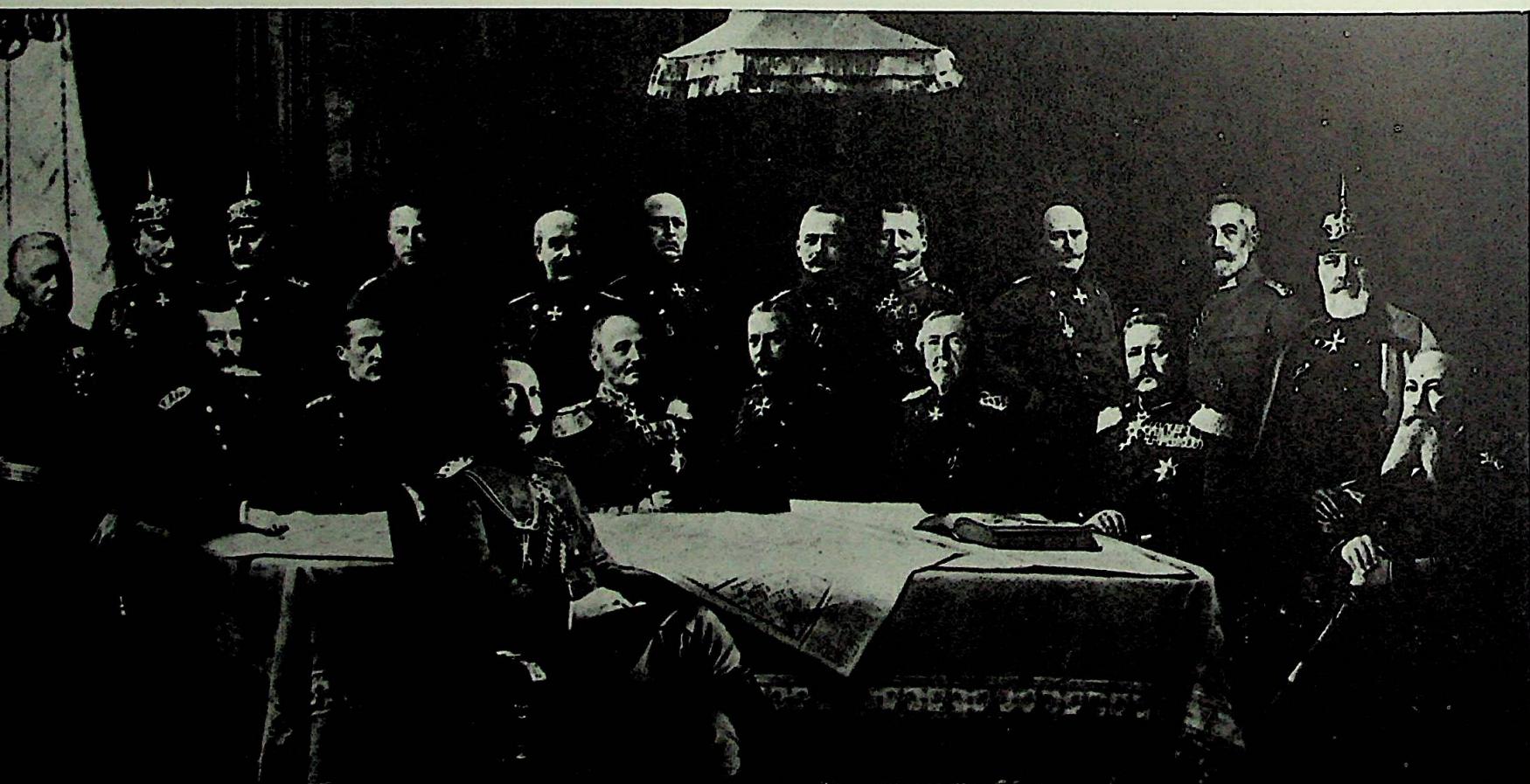




*Left: Field Marshal Earl Haig, a portrait by Sir William Orpen. Haig succeeded Sir John French as British commander-in-chief on the Western Front at the end of 1915. He wrote to his wife after his appointment: 'All seem to expect success as the result of my arrival, and somehow give me the idea that they think I am "meant to win" by some SUPERIOR POWER. As you know, while doing my utmost, I feel one's best can go but a short way without help from ABOVE . . .' (Imperial War Museum, London.)*

*Below: the Kaiser with his war lords. 'If people in Germany think I am the Supreme Commander', William complained, 'They are grossly mistaken. The General Staff tells me nothing and never asks my advice. I drink tea, go for walks, and saw wood . . .'*

*Right: 'Troops repelling a German counter-attack east of Tilloy' by Frank Dadd. Neither side suspected at the beginning of the war the advantage which barbed wire and the machine gun would give to the defence. 'The machine gun', Haig insisted, 'is a much over-rated weapon, and two per battalion are more than sufficient.' (Imperial War Museum, London.)*





spicuous in khaki and field-grey, the French sought to make themselves as conspicuous as possible. Confident that their *élan* would shatter the enemy's nerve, their infantry went to battle in blue overcoats and red pantaloons. 'The French army', said its Field Regulations, 'knows no law but the offensive.' French *élan*, however, was no match for German firepower. The French assault on the German frontier ended in a series of disasters, collectively known as the Battles of the Frontiers. Unable to comprehend what had gone wrong, Joffre blamed the defeats on 'a lack of offensive spirit'.

The Germans, meanwhile, had swept through Belgium and were advancing into northern France. By the beginning of September they had reached the Marne, Paris was in a panic, and the French government had left for Bordeaux. The very speed of its advance, however, had led the German army to over-reach itself. Corps commanders were often out of touch both with headquarters and with one another. Moltke hardly knew where his armies were for days on end. Instead of enveloping Paris, as Moltke had planned, the German army wheeled to the south-east, leaving its flank exposed to a brilliantly successful counter-attack on the Marne by the Paris garrison.

Some historians have since concluded that the Schlieffen Plan was doomed from the beginning. The French, however, believed that they had been saved only by a miracle: 'the miracle of the Marne'. Perhaps the

crucial factor in the German failure was that Moltke had been forced, at a critical stage of the French campaign, to transfer two army corps to the Eastern Front to meet an unexpected Russian attack in East Prussia. The miracle of the Marne was won as much in East Prussia as on the Marne itself.

#### The Western Front

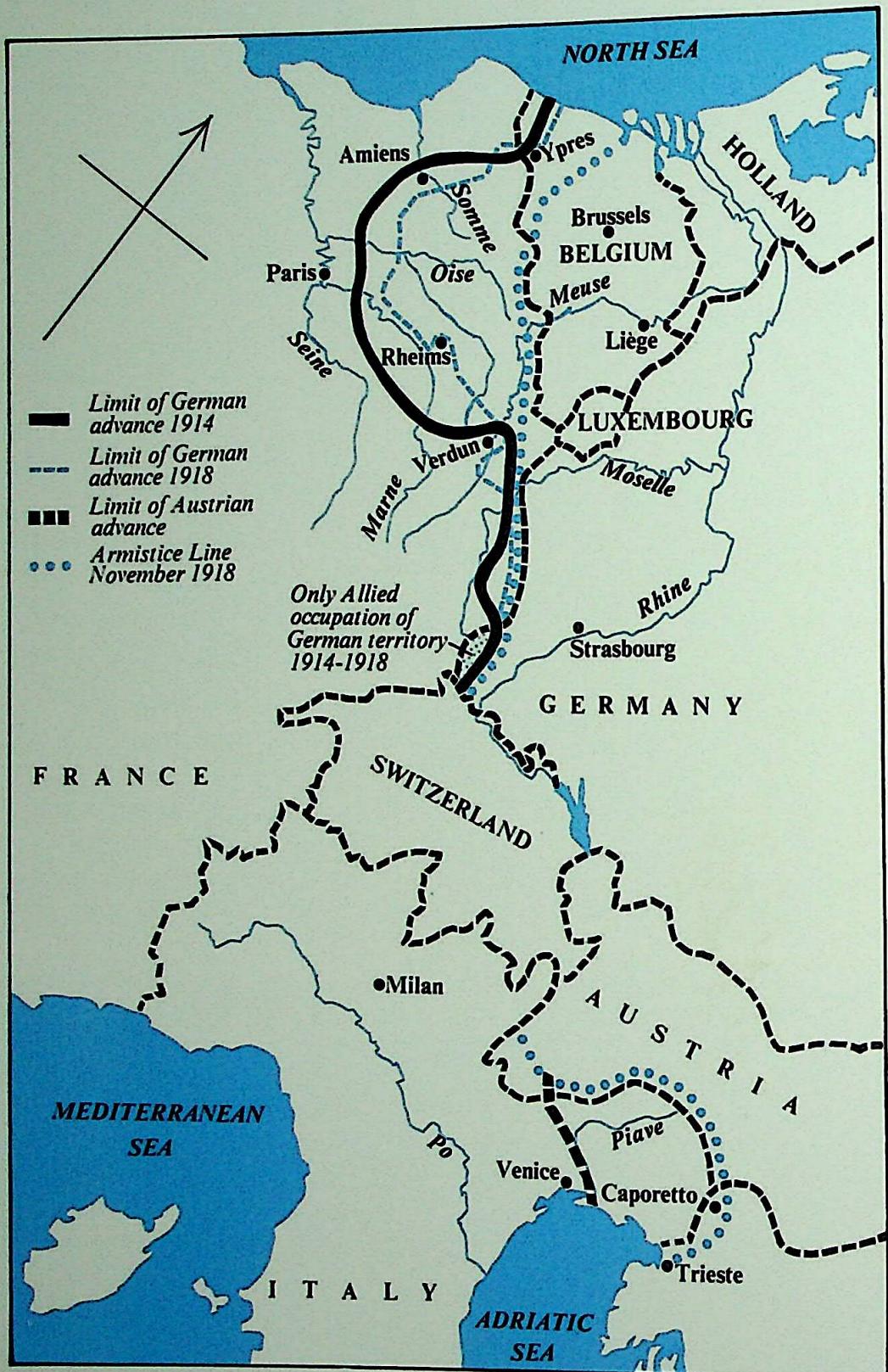
The 'miracle of the Marne' was followed by a race to the sea, with each side trying, unsuccessfully, to turn the other's flank before the sea was reached. Though Germany had failed to win a quick victory, it still retained the initiative in the war. When the race to the sea was over, Germany remained in control of one-tenth of France's territory, 80 per cent of its coal, and almost the whole of its iron ore. For the next three and a half years Germany was usually content to remain on the defensive behind an impregnable line of trenches, against which the Allied armies battered in vain. At no time before the spring of 1918 did the front lines established during the race to the sea in 1914 vary in depth by as much as ten miles. 'The Western Front', wrote Robert Graves, 'was known among its embittered inhabitants as the Sausage Machine because it was fed with live men, churned out corpses, and remained firmly screwed in place.'

The reason for this stalemate was technological. The invention of barbed wire and the machine gun had given a temporary, but overwhelming, advantage to the defence.

Only a further technological advance could turn the advantage once more in favour of attack. Some historians have argued that by the end of 1916 the invention of the tank already provided just such a technological advance, and that only the blindness of the French and British high commands prevented them from achieving a breakthrough. Until the closing months of the war, however, tanks were too deficient, both in quality and quantity, to end the stalemate on the Western Front. Even at their greatest victory, the battle of Amiens, in August 1918, 270 of a total of 415 tanks were destroyed in one day's fighting. Deadlock in the west continued for so long, not because generals were more incompetent than in the past but, quite simply, because they lacked the means to break it.

'The German lines in France', wrote Kitchener at the beginning of 1915, 'may be looked on as a fortress that cannot be carried by assault.' With the exception of Kitchener, however, most Allied generals were confident of an early breakthrough. The greatest criticism that can be levelled at the Allied commanders on the Western Front is not that they failed to make this breakthrough, but that they refused for so long, against all the evidence, to recognise the enormous strength of the enemy's position.

Joffre's plan to win the war in 1915 was for a gigantic pincer movement against the German lines, with Anglo-French forces attacking in Artois, and the French alone



Above: the Western and Italian fronts. 'All the wars of the world', wrote Winston Churchill of the Western Front at the end of 1914, 'could show nothing to compare with the continuous front which had now been established. Ramparts more than 350 miles long, ceaselessly guarded by millions of men, sustained by thousands of cannons, stretched from the Swiss frontier to the North Sea'. By comparison, the Italian front was little more than a 'sideshow'.

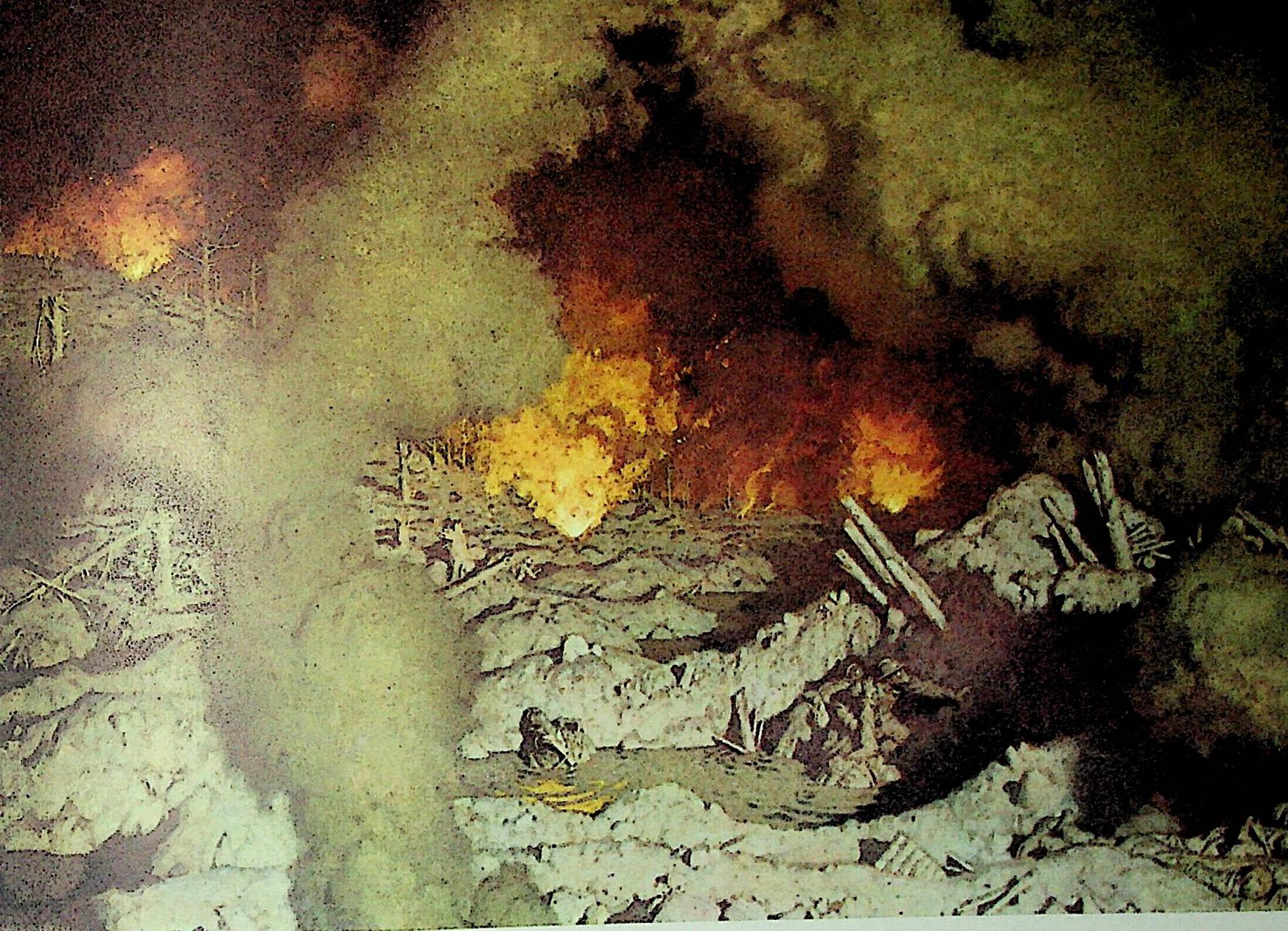
further south in Champagne. Offensives on these fronts continued intermittently throughout the year, none achieving an advance of more than three miles. At the end of the year Joffre comforted himself with the thought that, even if the Germans had yet to be defeated, they were being worn down by a war of attrition. Pinning his faith in inflated estimates of German losses, he refused, like most other Allied generals (and many later historians), to accept the simple truth that a war of attrition on the Western Front was bound to bear most heavily on the attacker. In fact, French and English losses in 1915 were almost double those of Germany: probably 1,600,000 killed and wounded as against 850,000 of the enemy.

Enormous though these losses were, they were surpassed by even greater losses in the east. In 1915 Falkenhayn, the new German commander-in-chief, had chosen to remain on the defensive in the west, whilst launching his main offensive in the east. In five months, between May and September 1915, Russia lost a million men in prisoners alone, at least a million more (perhaps far more) in killed and wounded, and more territory than the whole area of France. Judging by size alone, Falkenhayn had won what has been called 'the greatest battle in history'. But it was not, and could not be, a decisive victory. Though the Russians had been forced to retreat three hundred miles, they were left with a shorter line to defend, and still possessed vast reserves of manpower from which to replace their losses. In the east, as in the west, 1915 ended in deadlock.

### Verdun—the longest battle

The plan of campaign devised by the Allies for 1916 simply proposed to repeat the mistakes of 1915 on a larger scale. Joffre convinced himself and many others that, on the Western Front at least, the Allies had been on the verge of a breakthrough in 1915, robbed of a victory only by a lack of heavy guns and ammunition. Next year, with plenty of munitions and the first British conscript armies, things would be different. As soon as sufficient shells were available, Haig told *The Times* correspondent, 'we could walk through the German lines at several places'. To make sure of victory in 1916 it was agreed to launch all-out offensives simultaneously on both the Western and the Eastern Fronts. Italy, which had entered the war on the side of the Allies in 1915, would join in with an attack on Austria from the south.

Falkenhayn's plan for victory was much more subtle. He proposed to win the war not by defeating the enemy in battle but by bleeding him to death—a new and ingenious addition to the theory of warfare. The power on whom Falkenhayn proposed to perform this experiment was France:



"Within our reach behind the French sector of the Western Front there are objectives for the retention of which the French General Staff would be compelled to throw in every man they have. If they do so, the forces of France will bleed to death—as there can be no question of voluntary withdrawal—whether we reach our goal or not."

Falkenhayn selected as his target the great French fortress of Verdun, already half encircled by German lines, and one of the few places on the Western Front where the defenders seemed to be at a disadvantage. German communications to the Verdun salient were excellent, and their heavy guns had closed all French routes to the fortress, except for one light railway and one road, which became known during the battle as the *voie sacrée*. Throughout the battle of Verdun supply remained as great a problem as the fighting itself. For months on end 3,000 lorries passed every day along the *voie sacrée* carrying 20,000 men and 4,000 tons of supplies.

The battle of Verdun became, as Falkenhayn had intended, the supreme symbol of attrition even in a war of attrition. It lasted

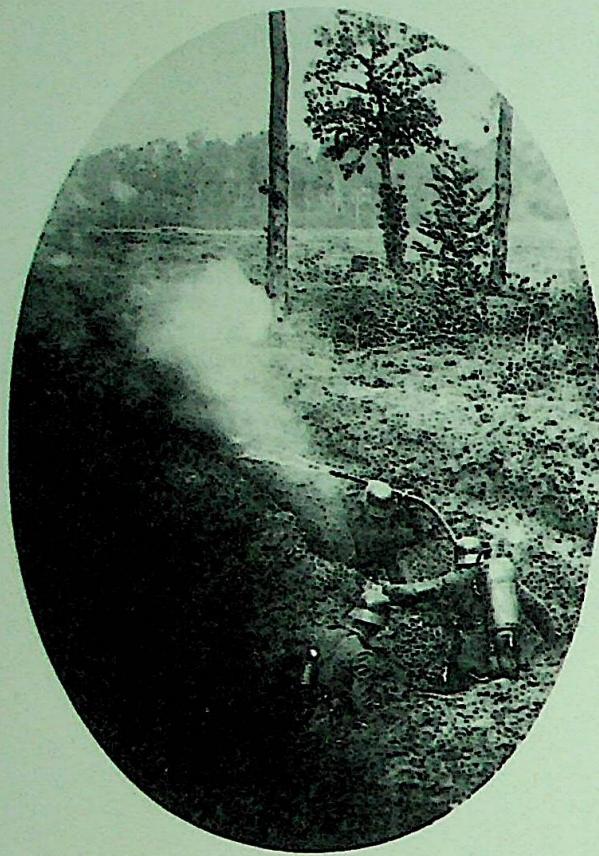
ten months, from February to November 1916, longer than any battle had ever lasted before. In no other battle in the history of warfare have so many died on so small an area of ground. As the battle progressed, however, it became increasingly clear that Falkenhayn had made one fatal miscalculation. 'Germany is perfectly free', he had written, 'to accelerate or draw out the offensive, to intensify it or to break it off from time to time as suits its purpose.' After the first week of the battle Falkenhayn's freedom of action had disappeared. Just as French prestige was involved in the defence of Verdun, so German prestige increasingly demanded its capture. The battle of Verdun ended by bleeding the German army almost as disastrously as it bled the French.

In the summer of 1916, however, Germany came very close to victory. Had Germany been able to press home its attack after the capture of Fort Vaux on 7 June, it could, in the opinion of the historian of the battle, Alistair Horne, 'almost certainly have broken through to Verdun'. In June 1916, as in the other great crisis of the war in September 1914, the French were saved by

*Above: 'Hell' by the French artist, Georges Leroux: Verdun, 1916. (Imperial War Museum, London.)*

a Russian offensive in the east. Partly in response to desperate appeals from France to relieve the pressure on Verdun, Brusilov, the ablest of the Russian generals, attacked the Austrians on the south-east front with forty divisions. Many German officers had long believed that, by its alliance with Austria, 'Germany was fettered to a corpse'. They were confirmed in this opinion by the spectacular success of the Brusilov offensive. What began as a diversionary attack rapidly turned into a rout of the Austrian army along a three hundred mile front. By the time German troops arrived to try and stem the Austrian retreat in September, Brusilov had taken almost half a million prisoners.

Despite its ultimate failure, the Brusilov offensive had far-reaching consequences on both the Eastern and Western Fronts. In the east it brought nearer the disintegration of the Austrian Empire. In the west it changed the course of the battle for Verdun.



At a crucial moment, Falkenhayn was forced to divert to the Eastern Front divisions intended to push home the assault on Verdun. At a time when French reserves were almost exhausted, General Pétain, who had been summoned to the defence of Verdun, was given a vital ten days' breathing space in which to strengthen his defences and bring up fresh troops. When the Germans were able to resume their offensive, on 22 June, their chance of victory had gone.

### The Somme offensive

Verdun was a turning point in the history of the Western Front. From now on, the main burden of the fighting passed from France to Britain. The French had been so weakened at Verdun that they were no longer capable of assuming the major role in the planned summer offensive on the Somme. When the battle began on 1 July the French contingent had been reduced by Verdun from forty to fourteen divisions alongside Haig's twenty-five. Yet what successes were achieved on the first day of the offensive were due mainly to the French. The latter moved swiftly in small groups supported by machine guns, using methods learnt from the Germans at Verdun, and overran most of the German front line. The British, weighed down by sixty-six pound packs, advanced at walking pace in even lines, presenting the German machine guns with their best target of the war. As one line of British troops was cut down, so others came on, regularly spaced at intervals of a hundred yards. On 1 July the British lost almost 60,000 men killed and wounded in a single day: more than on any



other day in the history of the British army, greater, too, than the losses suffered by any other army on any day of the First World War.

Neither Haig nor any of his staff officers had any idea of the extent of the catastrophe that had befallen them. Haig wrote in his diary on the following day: 'The enemy has undoubtedly been severely shaken. Our correct course, therefore, is to press him hard with the least possible delay.' The battle of the Somme was to last five months. Only when the winter rains had reduced the battleground to a wilderness of mud was Haig, at last, forced to call a halt. When the battle ended, though the front line had here and there advanced about five miles, some of the objectives set for the first day's offensive had still not been achieved. Like Joffre after the battle of Champagne a year before, Haig comforted himself with the delusion, strengthened by inflated estimates of enemy casualties, that the Somme had been successful as a battle of attrition. 'The results of the Somme', he wrote, 'fully justify confidence in our ability to master the enemy's power of resistance'.

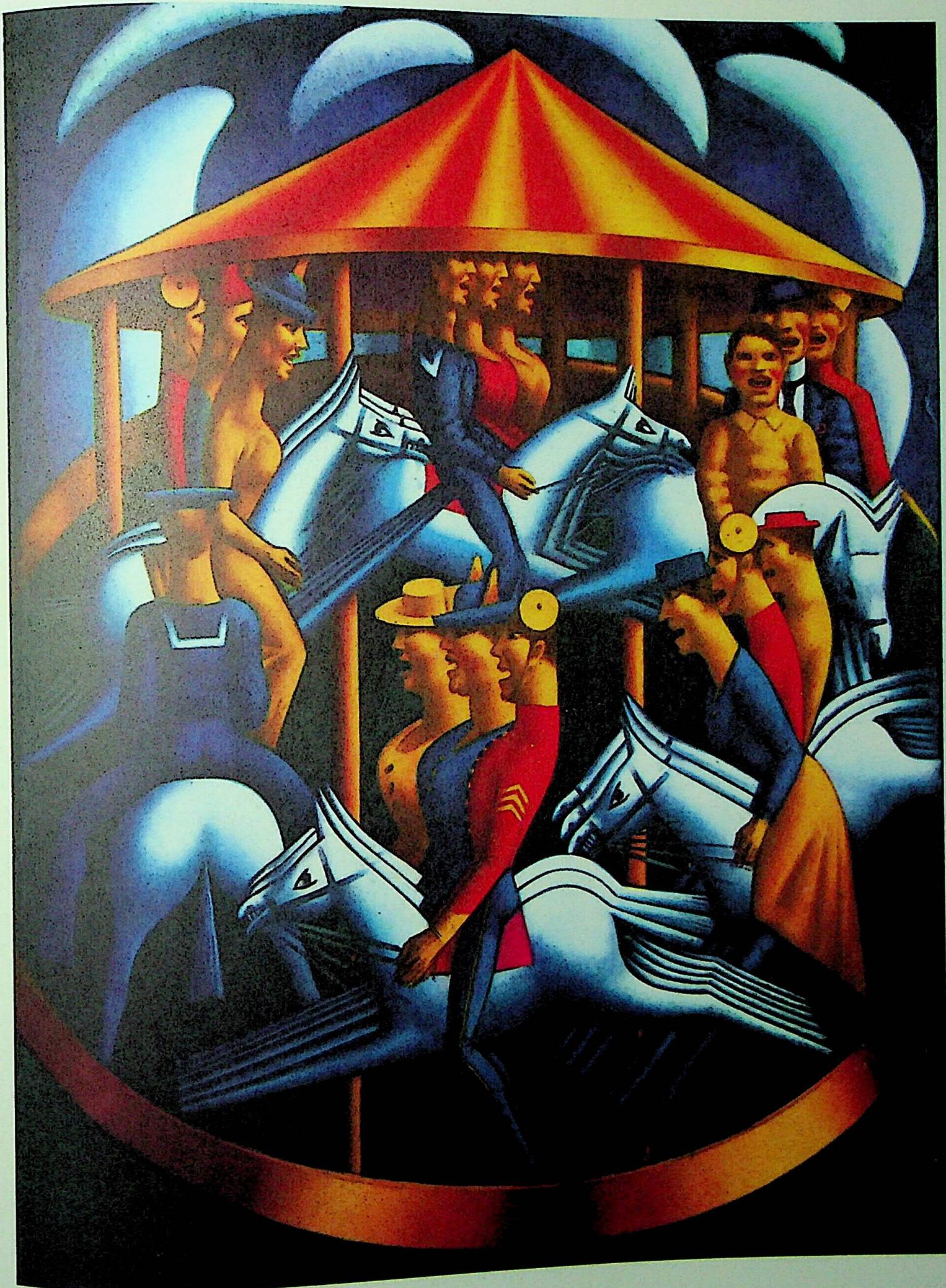
### A fight to the finish

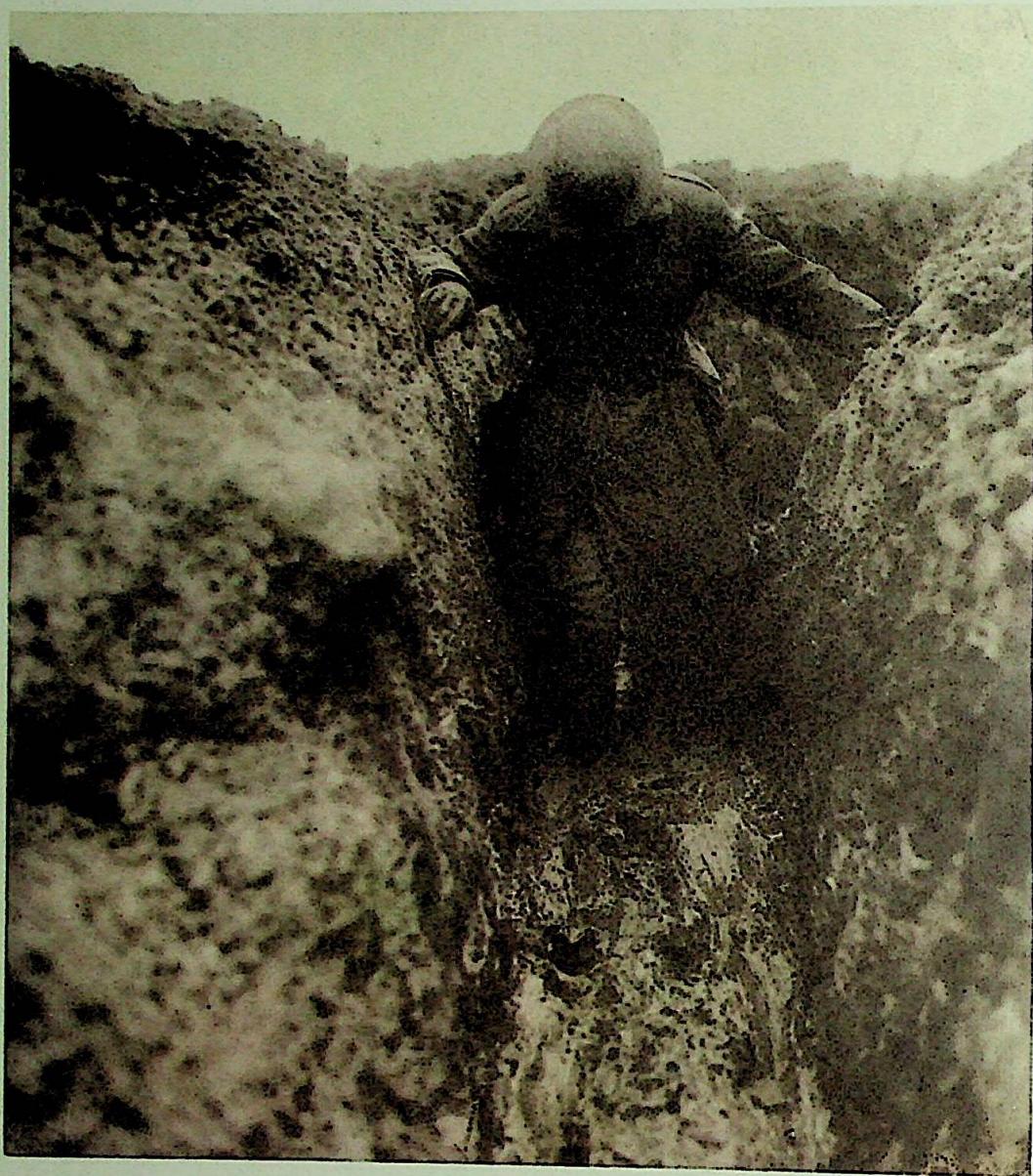
'The wars that are won', it has been said, 'never are the wars that were begun.' Wars, once begun, invariably generate war aims for which the combatants would never at the outset have gone to battle. Thus it was after 1914. Russia would not have started a war to capture Constantinople and the Straits, nor Germany for the creation of a Belgian satellite, nor France for the recovery of Alsace-Lorraine. Yet once they had gone to

*Above left: flamethrowers, like gas, were first used by the Germans on the Western Front in 1915; the fuel tank contained a mixture of petrol and nitrogen. Each weapon needed two soldiers to operate, and a third to cover them. (Imperial War Museum, London.)*

*Above: the interior of a shell-filling shop in a British munitions factory. During the early years of the war the great shortage was less in guns than ammunition. The army's main gun on the Western Front, the eighteen-pounder, required fifty shells a day to be effective. By May 1915 it was still receiving only eleven. The 'Shell Scandal' in the spring of 1915 led to the creation of a new ministry of munitions with Lloyd George as its first minister. By the end of the war over 900,000 women were working in the munitions industries. Many were injured by explosions or suffered severe injury to their health; those working on T.N.T. became known as 'canaries' because of the yellow discolouration of their skin. (Imperial War Museum, London.)*

*Right: 'The Merry-go-round' by Mark Gertler, a twentieth-century danse macabre, painted after the battle of the Somme. D. H. Lawrence described it in a letter to Gertler as 'a terrible picture . . . a terrifying coloured flame of decomposition'. (Bun Uri Art Gallery, London.)*





Left: 'The boys stand in mud and water through the night . . . A peg of wood will help suspend a groundsheet against the dripping clay wall and a man may flatten himself under this looking like part of the trench'. (Letter from a British Sergeant on the Western Front.) (Imperial War Museum, London.)

Right: ' . . . a sad land, weak with sweats of dearth  
Gray, cratered like the moon with hollow woe,

And pitted with great pocks and scabs of plagues.' Wilfred Owen (1893-1918).

Killed in action a week before the armistice. (Imperial War Museum, London.)

war for other reasons, all these ambitions, and others like them, were swiftly adopted as war aims. And war aims multiplied still further as each side struggled to win over neutrals or retain existing allies by territorial bribes.

Italy's entry into the war, in 1915, was preceded by a protracted auction in which each side competed for its favours and Italy played off one against the other. Much the same process preceded the entry of Bulgaria on the side of the Central Powers in 1915 and Rumania on the side of the Allies a year later, though—like Italy—neither significantly influenced the outcome of the war. Despite the stalemate in the war at the end of 1916, despite the growing exhaustion on each side, the extent of the war aims of each alliance condemned attempts to arrange a compromise peace to inevitable failure. Neither side was prepared to accept anything approaching a return to the status quo of July 1914, though both were understandably reluctant to reveal the full extent of their ambitions.

There was one further reason why a compromise peace was impossible. The French writer, de Tocqueville, had long ago pre-

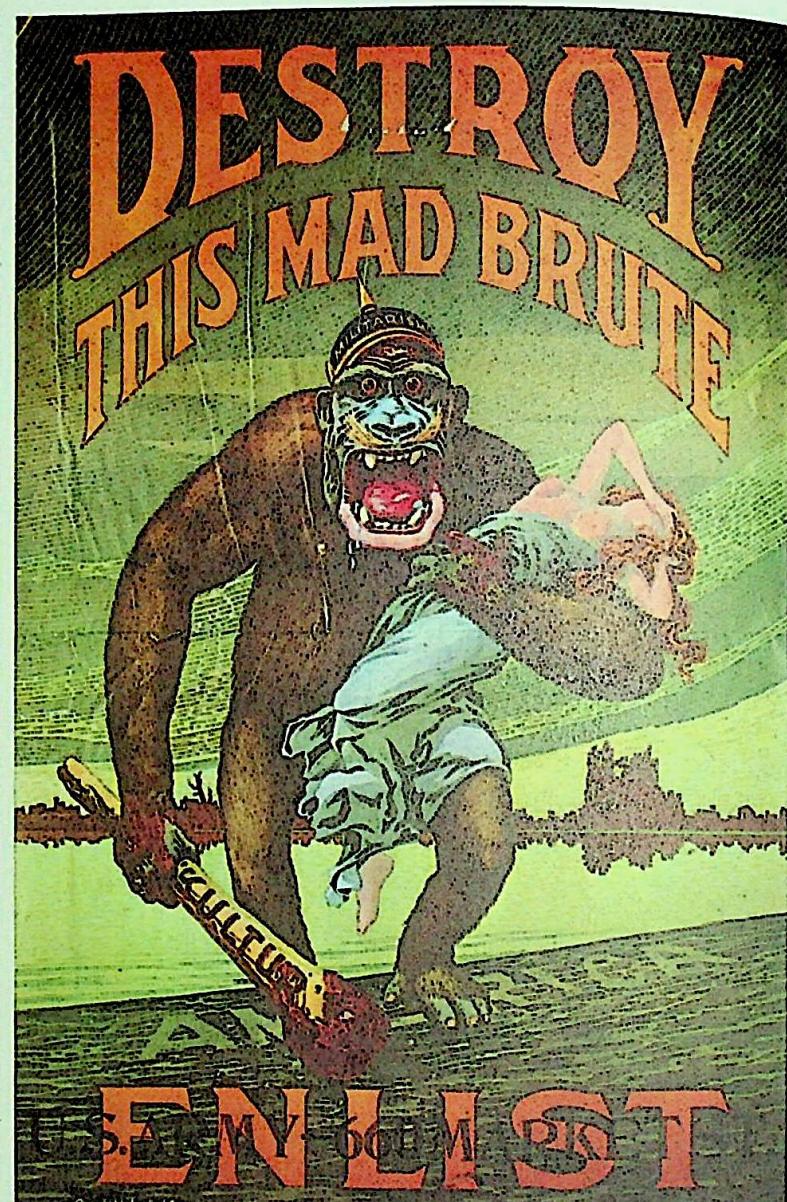
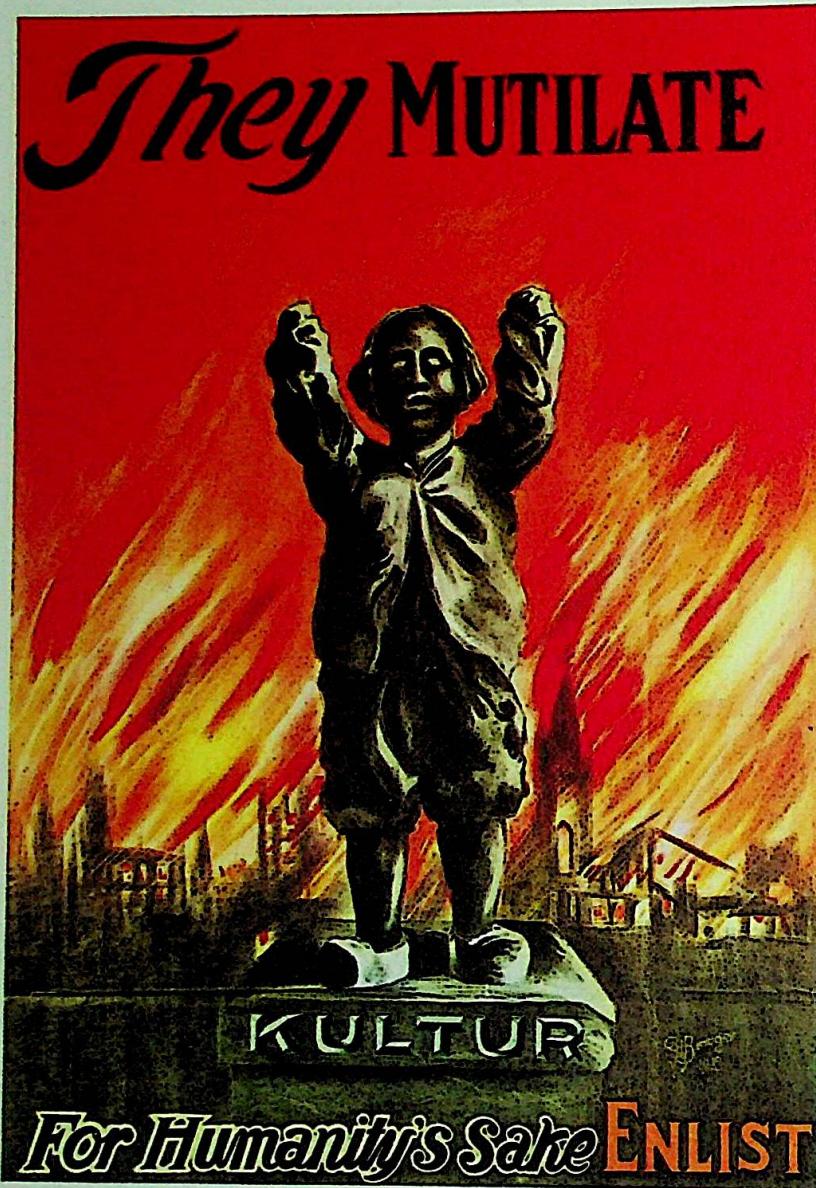
dicted that though democracies might be reluctant to involve themselves in war, once embarked on war they would not readily make peace. In an age of mass education, the people of Europe were no longer content to accept the pretexts which for centuries had served as an excuse for war. They needed to believe, instead, that they were involved in a moral crusade to protect civilisation itself. Only such a cause could justify the millions of lives whose sacrifice the war demanded. To bolster its belief in the rightness of its cause, each side convinced itself of the wickedness of its opponent. British people swiftly came to credit Germans with a variety of mythical atrocities: priests hung as clappers in cathedral bells, crucified prisoners of war, and children with their hands cut off. With so evil an enemy a compromise peace must be unthinkable. As Lloyd George put it shortly before he succeeded Asquith as prime minister in December 1916: 'The fight must be to a finish—to a knock-out.'

### The war at sea

Britain possessed two decisive advantages over Germany at sea. The first was the size of her fleet: the British battle fleet—the 'Grand Fleet'—had thirty-one dreadnaughts against Germany's eighteen. Britain's strategic advantages were equally great. The fact that the British Isles lay between German ports and the seaways of the world meant that the German High Seas fleet could venture into the Atlantic only at the risk of having its retreat cut off—a risk it dare not take. For sixteen years the Germans had been building a fleet with which to challenge British supremacy at sea. When war came they dared not make the challenge. For almost two years the German battle fleet stayed cooped up in the Baltic, with only occasional sorties by detachments into the North Sea.

Yet the Grand Fleet did possess two serious weaknesses which the Germans failed either to detect or exploit. First, the fact that the fleet was based in the north at Scapa Flow and Rosyth made it impossible to offer real protection to the troop carriers taking British forces to the Western Front.

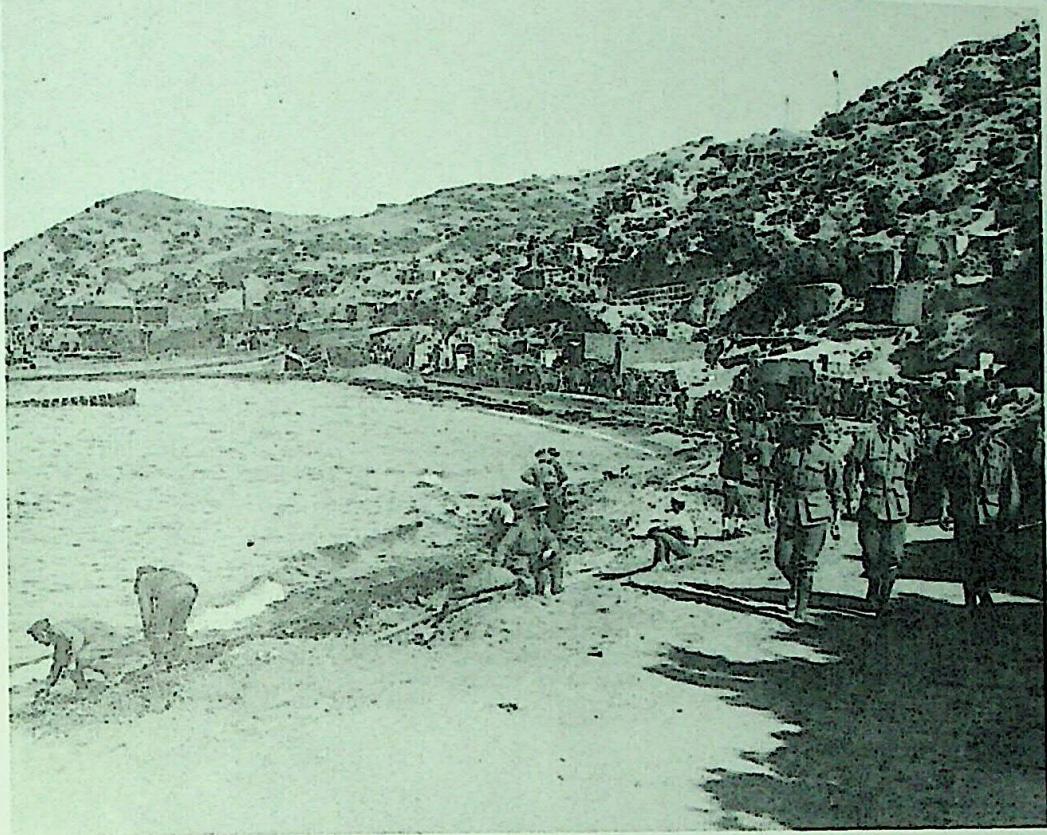




*Above and above right: Allied atrocity propaganda. There was a striking contrast in the attitude of the British public towards Germany during the two world wars. During the Second World War almost everyone in Britain vastly underestimated the scale of German atrocities in the concentration camps and on the Eastern Front. During the First World War, on the contrary, the Germans were credited with a whole series of atrocities which they never committed. They were, for example, regularly alleged by Allied propagandists to have established factories for extracting glycerine from the bodies of Allied soldiers. The German public was similarly assured that the French habitually gouged the eyes out of the bodies of German soldiers.*

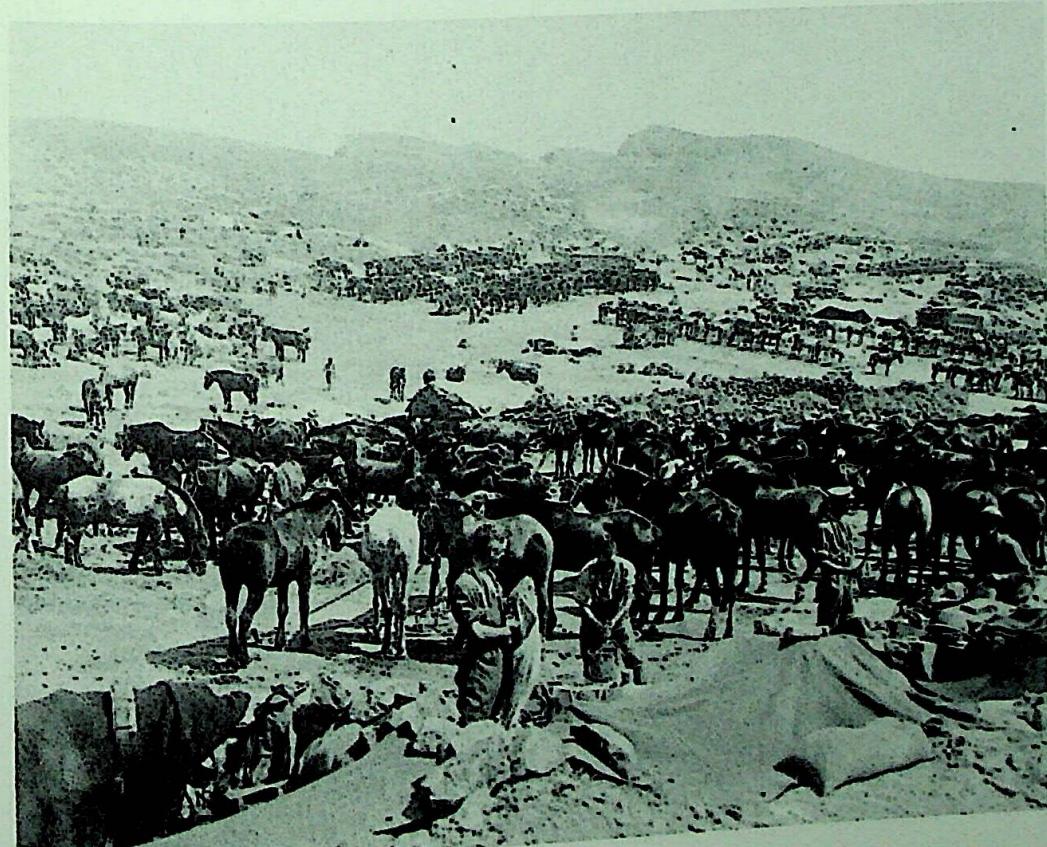
*Right: Lloyd George with munitions girls at Neath. During his six years as prime minister from 1916 to 1922 Lloyd George established himself as one of the ablest leaders in the history of British politics. 'He was', wrote Winston Churchill, 'the greatest master of the art of getting things done and putting things through that I ever knew; in fact no British politician in my day possessed half his competence as a mover of men and affairs.'*





*The Gallipoli campaign. Above: Anzac beach. Note the primitive living accommodation constructed on the side of the hill. The campaign rapidly turned into a miniature version of the Western Front with, as Professor Marwick observes, 'the added torment of dysentery in summer and frost-*

*bite in winter'. Below: horses landed at Suvla beach. Even on the Western Front the Allies used six times as many horses as mechanised vehicles. In France alone during 1918 there were 314,000 horses and 81,000 mules with the Allied armies. (Imperial War Museum, London.)*



Jellicoe, the commander of the Grand Fleet, later admitted that the German fleet 'could have stood a good chance of making the attack [on the troop carriers] and returning to his base before the [British] fleet could intervene'. The second great weakness of the Grand Fleet was its lack, either at Rosyth or Scapa Flow, of a really secure naval base. Throughout the early stages of the war Jellicoe was constantly preoccupied by the danger of submarine attack. In November 1914 a false sighting of an enemy submarine off Scapa Flow actually succeeded in putting the Grand Fleet to flight. Once the war was over, Jellicoe himself expressed surprise that Germany had not attempted an attack on the Grand Fleet while it lay in harbour:

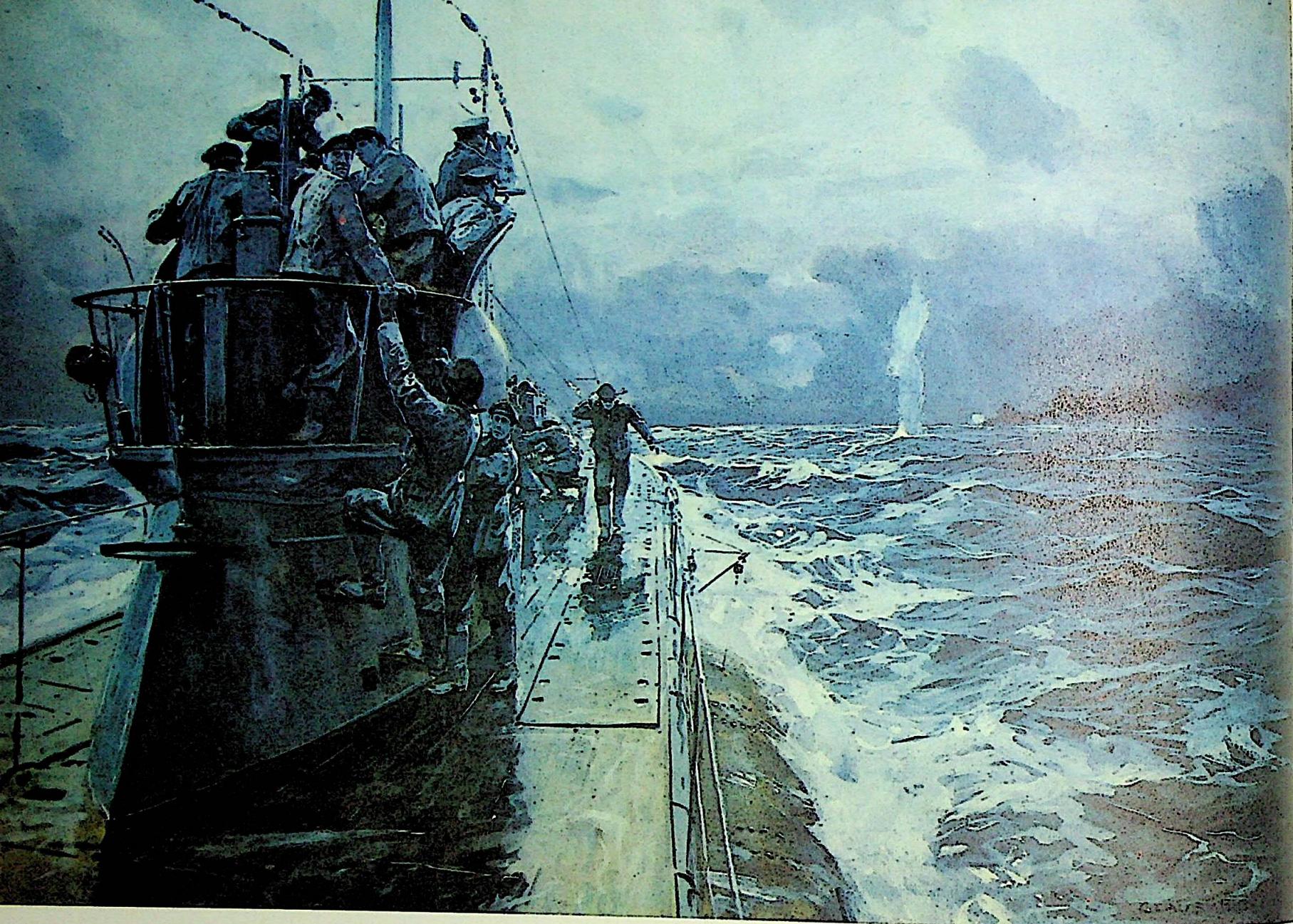
'It may have seemed impossible to the German mind that we should place our Fleet, on which the Empire depended for its very existence, in a position where it was open to submarine and destroyer attack.'

#### **The Gallipoli campaign**

In past European wars Britain had traditionally used its command of the seas to land its forces at the most vulnerable point of the enemy's coastline. In accordance with this strategy the Admiralty had drawn up plans before 1914 for an amphibious assault on Germany's Baltic coast. Once the war began, however, the overwhelming demands of the Western Front forced Britain to follow a continental rather than a maritime strategy. The only large-scale amphibious operation launched by Britain during the war was the Gallipoli campaign of 1915. Its principal purpose was to force the Straits and re-establish a supply route to Russia, with whom communications had been broken by Turkey's entry into the war on the side of the Central Powers.

From first to last, however, the operation was terribly bungled. An unsuccessful attempt by the Royal Navy, in February 1915, to force the Straits without the use of troops sacrificed the crucial advantage of surprise and allowed the Turks time in which to dig themselves in. Churchill later claimed, probably correctly, that: 'three divisions in February could have occupied the Gallipoli peninsula with little fighting'.

By the time the first Allied landings were made in April, however, seven divisions were insufficient. Thereafter, reinforcements were either too few or failed to arrive in time. 'We have', said Churchill in June, 'always sent two-thirds of what was necessary a month too late.' Though fighting on the peninsula continued for the rest of the year, the operation had finally to be abandoned and Allied troops evacuated in December. The failure at Gallipoli had important consequences. By being interpreted as a failure of design, rather than a failure of execution, it discredited the whole policy of amphibious operations for the



remainder of the war. And it seemed to clinch the argument of those who claimed that the only route to victory lay on the Western Front.

In Europe itself, the Royal Navy played a less direct part in the fighting than in previous European wars. Outside Europe, however, it won the war. The fact that Germany lost naval contact with its overseas empire meant that its colonies could be picked off one by one by Britain and its allies. Samoa and New Guinea fell to Australia and New Zealand within little more than a month of the outbreak of war. Early in November 1914 Japan, which entered the war as an ally of Britain, captured the German naval base at Kiaochow. Togoland fell to the British, German South-West Africa to the South Africans, and the Cameroons, after an eighteen-month campaign, to English, French, and Belgian forces advancing from three sides. Only in German East Africa, the largest and richest of the German colonies, did a commander of genius, General von Lettow-Vorbeck, succeed in continuing a guerrilla resistance until the end of the war.

The 'sideshows' in the German colonies, like other 'sideshows' nearer home, in Mesopotamia or at Salonika, had little influence on the outcome of the war in Europe. Even the fate of the German overseas empire was finally decided, not in the German colonies themselves, but on the Western Front. The true importance of the sideshows outside Europe—their impact on the growth of nationalism in India, China, and Japan (and, to a far lesser extent, in Africa)—became apparent only after the war was over.

In Europe itself the main function of the Royal Navy was to impose a naval blockade on Germany and its allies. Britain claimed the right to stop and search any ship suspected of making for German ports. Neutral countries bordering on Germany even had quotas imposed upon their imports, for fear that some of these might find their way to Germany. The United States protested that Britain was violating the freedom of the seas; but it protested more vigorously still against Germany's attempt to counterblockade Britain by the use of mines and submarines.

*Above: a German U-boat, painted by Claus Bergen. In the spring of 1917 Britain seemed to have no answer to submarine attacks on its merchant navy. Jellicoe told Admiral Sims of the U.S. Navy in April: 'They (the Germans) will win the war, unless we can stop these losses—and stop them quickly'. When Sims asked if there was no solution, Jellicoe replied: 'Absolutely none that we can see now'. (Smithsonian Institute, Washington D.C.)*

*Above right: 'This is how your money can fight—turn it into U-boats!' A German poster appeals for investment in war loans. In the background is a sinking Allied ship. (Bibliothek für Zeitgeschichte, Stuttgart.)*



In April 1915 the British liner *Lusitania* was torpedoed by a German submarine and sank with the loss of 1,200 lives, of whom more than a hundred were American citizens. The reaction of American public opinion was so violent (and so well exploited by British propaganda) that Germany was deterred for the next two years from continuing unrestricted U-boat warfare.

The war at sea, like the war on land, defied most men's expectations. Instead of ending in the naval Armageddon which both sides had expected, the war became instead a war of attrition aimed, not at destroying the enemy's fleet, but at destroying its economy and starving its civilian population into submission. The two great battle fleets, the source of so much pre-war rivalry, began to seem almost irrelevant.

### The battle of Jutland

In the spring of 1916, however, the growing success of the British blockade persuaded Admiral von Scheer, the new commander of the German High Seas Fleet, to make Germany's first direct challenge to British naval supremacy. Scheer's plan was to lure a part of the Grand Fleet into battle, and then suddenly confront it with the whole of the German High Seas Fleet. On 31 May 1916 a decoy force under Admiral Hipper (followed at a distance by Scheer himself) succeeded in making contact with a British squadron commanded by Admiral Beatty. The battle which followed began disastrously for Britain. As Beatty himself laconically remarked, 'There seems to be something wrong with our bloody ships today'. In little

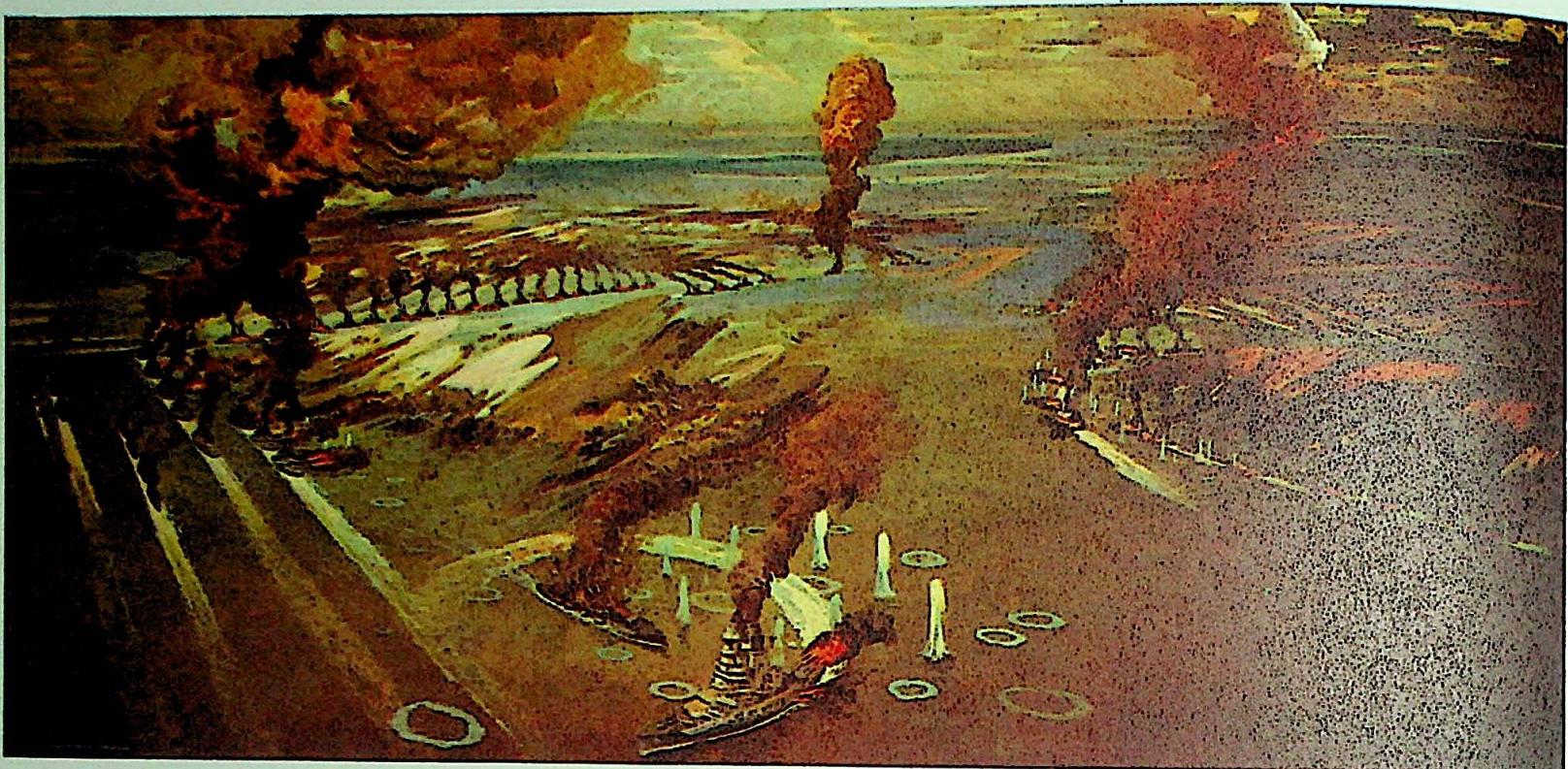
more than half an hour two of his six battle-cruisers had been sunk and his flagship seriously damaged. At this point, however, Beatty himself became a decoy. Turning north, apparently in flight, he succeeded in luring Scheer towards the whole of the Grand Fleet. Suddenly, Scheer found himself heavily outnumbered. The Royal Navy seemed within sight of a decisive victory.

Jellicoe, however, was acutely conscious that he was, in Churchill's words, 'the only man on either side who could lose the war in an afternoon'. He was doubtful whether even a decisive victory would do much to improve Britain's existing naval supremacy. Starting from such premises, Jellicoe was unlikely to take risks. He was deeply concerned, too, by the possibility of serious damage to the Grand Fleet from enemy torpedoes. Ever since the beginning of the war he had been convinced that a pursuit of the German battle fleet would be a hazardous undertaking. In October 1914 he had written in a memorandum to the Admiralty: 'If... the enemy battle fleet were to turn away from our advancing fleet, I should assume that the intention was to lead us over mines and submarines and decline to be so drawn'. Twice during the battle of Jutland the hail of fire from the Grand Fleet forced Scheer to break off the engagement and turn his fleet away. On both occasions a determined pursuit might have led to a decisive British victory. On both occasions Jellicoe refused a pursuit because of the danger of torpedo attack.

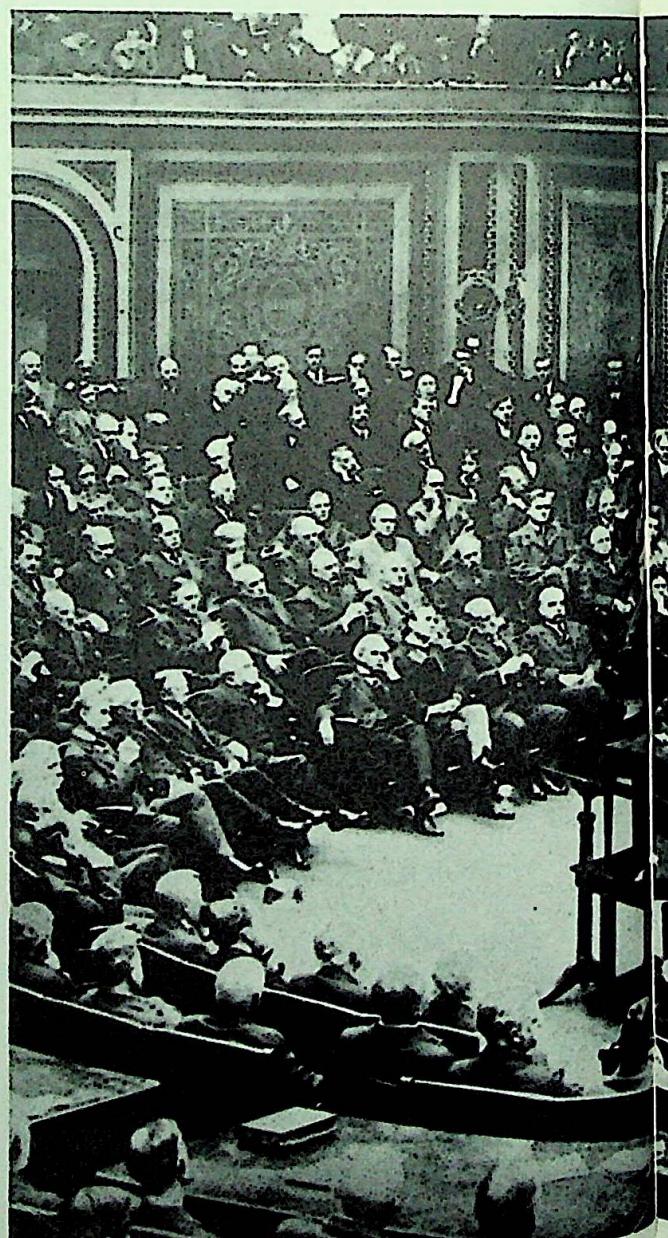
When night fell on 31 May, Jellicoe still lay between the German fleet and its home base, and hoped for victory on the following day. Scheer, however, had two alternative routes back to base. Tragically, Jellicoe chose to cover the wrong one. Part of the blame for this critical decision lies with Jellicoe himself. Even with the information he possessed, he might have deduced that Scheer was heading for home, under cover of darkness, by the Horn Reef passage off the coast of Denmark.

An even greater share of the blame, however, belongs to the Admiralty. During the night of 31 May a series of signals from the German fleet were intercepted and deciphered in Whitehall. Some of the most important were, inexcusably, never passed on to Jellicoe. 'These errors', claimed Jellicoe later, 'were absolutely fatal, as the information if passed to me would have clearly shown that Scheer was making for the Horn Reef.' When morning came on 1 June, the German fleet was safe in Wilhelmshaven and the battle was over.

Both sides claimed the battle of Jutland as a victory: the British on the grounds that they had put the enemy to flight, the Germans on the more convincing grounds that, with a smaller fleet, they had inflicted the greater damage. The Grand Fleet had lost ships totalling 111,980 tons and 6,097 men killed, the Germans 62,233 tons and 2,551 men.



THE UNITED STATES OF GREAT BRITAIN AND AMERICA.  
John Bull (to President Wilson). "BRAVO, SIR! DELIGHTED TO HAVE YOU ON  
OUR SIDE."



Jutland had shown serious deficiencies both in the construction of British warships and in the training of their crews. In the building of the Grand Fleet armour had been sacrificed to speed and firepower. All three British battlecruisers sunk at Jutland had been lost because their magazines were not protected against flash. Most serious of all was the inability of the Royal Navy to fight at night. German crews were already trained in the use of starshell and the coordination of guns and searchlights—techniques which were not adopted by the Royal Navy until ten years after the war had ended. It was the Grand Fleet's ignorance of these techniques which allowed Scheer to make his escape under cover of darkness.

Despite the failings of the Grand Fleet Scheer dared not risk another Jutland. He now concluded that Germany's only hope of surviving the British blockade was to step up her own blockade of Britain. This decision to intensify the German blockade was to lead in 1917 to the resumption of unrestricted U-boat warfare. Scheer was confident that German submarines could

bring Britain to her knees before Britain had been able to ruin the German war economy. 'I guarantee', said the chief of the German naval staff, 'that the U-boat war will lead us to victory.' His prediction very nearly proved correct. In April 1917 alone, German U-boats sank 835,000 tons of Allied shipping. Britain's reserves of wheat rapidly diminished to a month and a half's supply. 'There is no good discussing plans for next spring', Jellicoe told the war cabinet in June, 'we cannot go on.' Only the convoy system, forced on the Admiralty by Lloyd George against its wishes, saved Britain from almost certain disaster.

Ultimately, however, the decision to resume unrestricted U-boat warfare was to have even more important consequences on land than on sea. By bringing about the intervention of the United States, it made the war, for the first time, truly a world war.

### America intervenes

At the beginning of 1917 the United States seemed to have done well out of its neu-

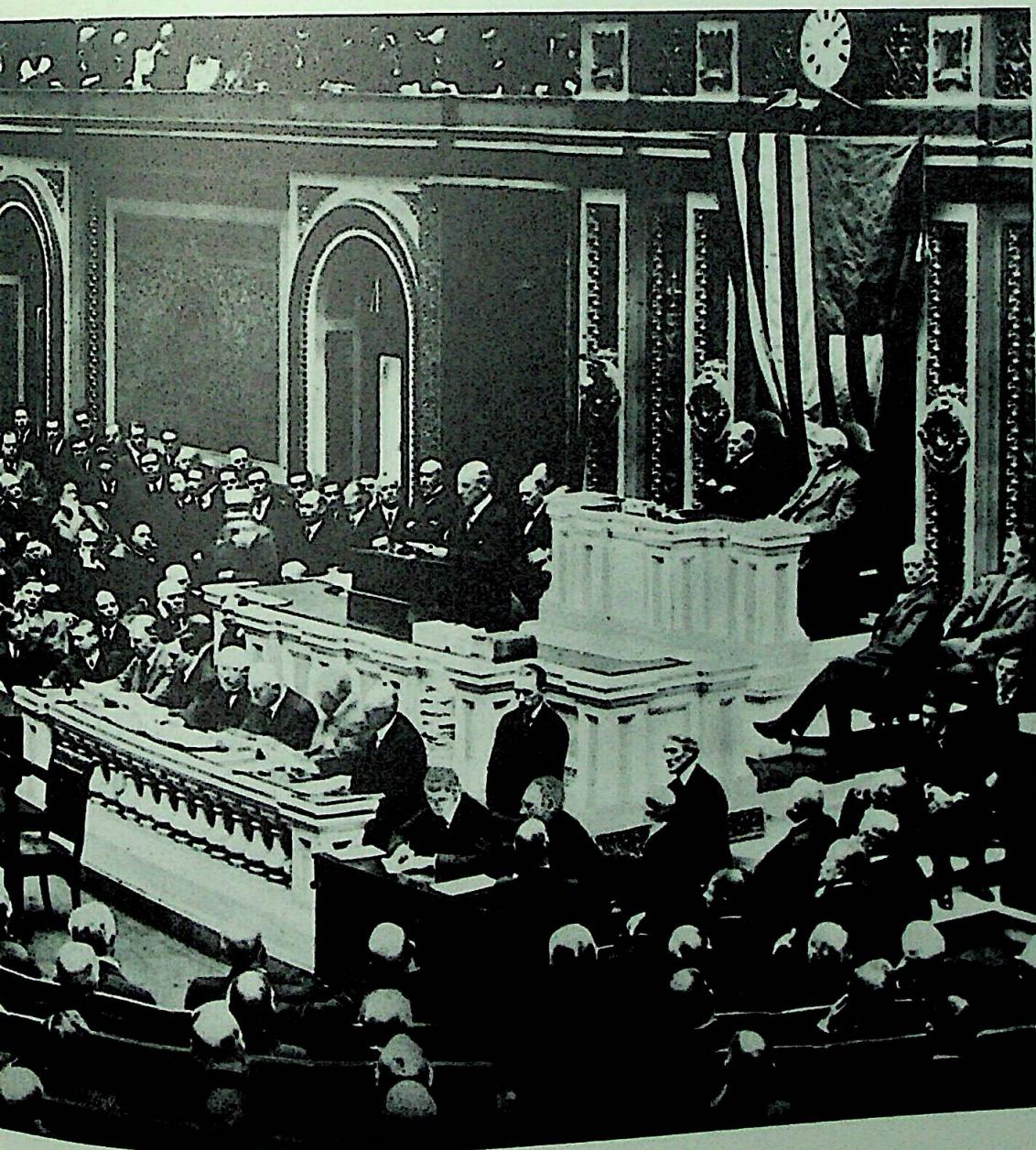
trality. Its overseas trading surplus had increased from 690 million dollars in 1913 to 3,000 million dollars in 1916. The first three years of the war saw the emergence of no less than 8,000 new American millionaires. The basis of this remarkable prosperity was the dependence of the Allied war economies on massive imports from the United States. While American exports to the Central Powers declined sharply as a result of the British blockade, her exports to France and Britain increased fourfold in two years. To finance their imports from the United States, the Allies were forced to rely on large American loans. By the end of 1916 the Allied debt stood at almost 2,000 million dollars. As the United States stake in Allies economies increased, so also did its stake in an Allied victory. If the Allies were to lose the war a vast American investment would stand at risk.

Though intervention on the Allied side may have been in the economic interests of the United States there is no convincing evidence that the decision to intervene was taken for economic reasons. There had been

*Far left, above: 'The Battle of Jutland' by Norman Howard. Jutland will probably be remembered as the last great naval battle in European history. Two hundred and fifty ships and twenty-five admirals took part in it. (Ministry of Defence, London.)*

*Far left, below: Wilson sets out to make the world safe for democracy. A cartoon from Punch. American war aims were set forth in Wilson's famous Fourteen Points of January 1918. Eight of these points applied the principle of self-determination (sometimes with modifications) to various parts of Europe. The other six were probably the most visionary outline of a peace settlement ever seriously proposed. They called for 'open covenants of peace openly arrived at', the freedom of the seas in peace and war, the removal of all economic barriers; the impartial adjustment of colonial claims, guaranteed progress to general disarmament, and a general association of nations to preserve the peace.*

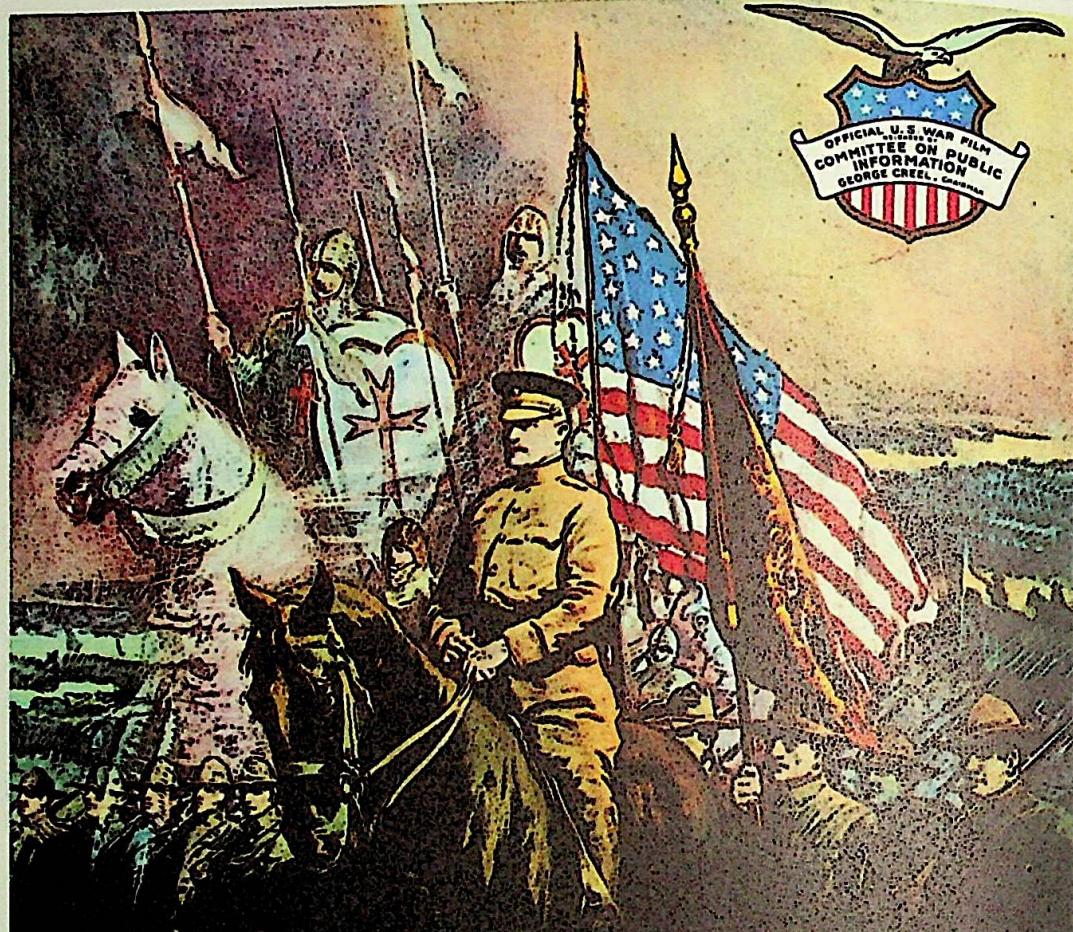
*Left: Wilson speaks to Congress on 6 April 1917. 'As the President proceeded in his address', recorded an eye witness, 'the tension of suppressed excitement grew until it burst all bounds . . . As the President recommended the declaration of war, applause which seemed universal rolled through the whole assembly from floor to gallery'.*





*Above: American soldiers leave New York for the Western Front. The small size of the United States peacetime army and the problems of transport over 3,000 miles of ocean made the arrival of American troops in Europe necessarily slow. By the beginning of the last German offensive in March 1918 there was only one American division fighting in the Allied line with three others in training areas.*

*Right: 'Crusaders' was an apt description of how 'Black Jack' Pershing, the commander of the American forces in Europe, saw his troops. He cabled back to the United States: 'There never has been a similar body of men to lead as clean lives as our American soldiers in France... Engaged in healthy, interesting exercises in the open air, with simple diet, officers and men like trained athletes are ready for their task. Forbidden the use of strong drink and protected by stringent regulations against sexual evils and supported by their own moral courage, their good behaviour is the subject of the most favourable comment... American mothers may rest assured that their sons are a credit to them and to the nation.' (Library of Congress, Washington D.C.)*



# PERSHING'S CRUSADERS

no sign, even at the end of 1916, that the United States proposed to abandon her neutrality. Indeed, Woodrow Wilson had been re-elected president in November on a programme that proclaimed, 'He kept us out of war'.

Had the Russian revolution of March 1917 come only two months earlier the United States might never have entered the war at all. If Germany, at the beginning of 1917, had been able to foresee the possibility of a quick victory in the east which would allow it to concentrate all its forces on the Western Front, it might have decided not to take the risks involved in trying to decide the war at sea. Tirpitz wrote later:

'Had we been able to foresee in Germany the Russian revolution we should not have needed to regard the submarine campaign of 1917 as our last hope. But in January 1917 there was no visible sign of the revolution'.

Germany's decision to begin unrestricted

submarine warfare was announced on 1 February 1917. It was followed in March by the sinking of American merchant vessels, without warning and with heavy loss of life. American intervention, as the German government itself realised, was now inevitable. The German Foreign Office, however, devised a comic opera scheme to cripple the American war effort in Europe by concluding a German alliance with Mexico, which, it was hoped, Japan might later be persuaded to join.

Unhappily for Zimmermann, the German foreign minister, a copy of his telegram outlining the terms of this alliance (and offering Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona to Mexico as bait) was intercepted by British intelligence, passed on to the United States government, and published in the American press. Its publication caused a greater uproar even than the sinking of the *Lusitania*.

A second reason for America's decision to enter the war was, quite simply, American

idealism. 'Sometimes', said Wilson, 'people call me an idealist. Well, that's the way I know I am an American. America, my fellow citizens, . . . is the only idealistic country in the world.' Time and again Wilson had tried as a neutral, without success, to bring the war in Europe to an end by American mediation. His failure had convinced him that the United States could bring its influence to bear, both on the course of the war and on the peace settlement which would follow it, only by being a belligerent. 'The world', Wilson told Congress, 'must be made safe for democracy.'

It was in this spirit that on 6 April 1917, the United States went to war. For many Americans, the news that Russia had overthrown the tsar, and joined the ranks of the democracies for whom the world had to be made safe, added a further reason for American intervention. 'The preservation and extension of the liberties so rapidly won in Russia', declared the *New York Nation*, 'are now inextricably bound up with the success of the Allies. A German victory would mean the collapse of free Russia.'

## Revolution in Russia

Russian radicals had been predicting revolution in Russia ever since the middle of the nineteenth century. Nor was it only the radicals who made predictions. In 1884, the Russian minister of the interior confided to a foreign diplomat that, if tsarism were ever overthrown, its place would be taken by 'the communism of Mr Marx of London who has just died and whose theories I have studied with much attention and interest'.

Even before 1914, it was already clear that war was the catalyst most likely to lead to revolution. Just as the Crimean War had been followed by the end of serfdom, and the war with Japan by the revolution of 1905, so Russia's involvement in the First World War led to the revolution of March 1917 (known in Russia as the February revolution because the tsarist calendar was thirteen days behind the West).

By the beginning of 1917 it was clear that both the discontent and dislocation caused by the war were reaching a climax. Russia's casualties already numbered five million (perhaps far more—the government had lost count). On the home front, the cost of living had increased seven-fold since July 1914, and food supplies to the cities were breaking down. During the first two months of 1917 alone there were 1330 strikes, more than in the whole of the previous year. It was one of these strikes in Petrograd, the capital, which developed into the March revolution. The decisive factor in its success was the attitude of the Petrograd garrison. In 1905 the revolution had been broken by the army. In 1917 the army joined the revolution.

On 15 March, the tsar signed an act of abdication and handed over power to a pro-



visional government of liberal politicians. The new government had, however, to contend with a rival authority. First in Petrograd, and then throughout the country, local soviets ('councils') were formed, elected by factories and army units, and claiming that the provisional government was responsible to them as the true representatives of the Russian people.

Soviet schoolchildren are still brought up on the myth that, in the words of one of their textbooks, 'the Romanovs collapsed under the shattering blows of the people inspired by the Bolshevik party'. In fact, the revolution took the Bolsheviks (the

Above: the Eastern Front. Except for the opening Russian campaign in East Prussia and the Brusilov offensive in 1916 the war on the Eastern Front consisted mainly of a long and exhausting retreat by the Russian armies.



*Above: the collapse of the last Russian offensive: Russian soldiers fleeing before German cavalry in the summer of 1917. Though the war on the Eastern Front ended with the disintegration of the Russian armies, those armies played a vital part in the Allied victory in the West. At two critical moments in the war—in August 1914 before the 'miracle of the Marne', and in June 1916 during the battle of Verdun—Germany was forced to divert troops to meet a Russian offensive in the East which might otherwise have enabled it to win a decisive victory on the Western Front.*

*Left: 'They transported Lenin in a sealed truck like a plague bacillus from Switzerland into Russia' (Winston Churchill). A Russian artist's portrayal of Lenin's return to Petrograd in April 1917 in a train provided by the German government, which confidently expected him to disrupt the Russian war effort. 'We cannot pay attention to silly bourgeois prejudices', said Lenin. 'If the German capitalists are so stupid as to take us over to Russia, that's their funeral.'*



Russian communist party) by surprise. Their leader, Lenin, in exile in Switzerland, had said only a few weeks earlier: 'we, the old, will probably not live to see the decisive battles of the coming revolution'. Even after the March revolution, the Bolshevik following within the soviets lagged far behind that of their two socialist rivals—the Mensheviks and the Social Revolutionaries.

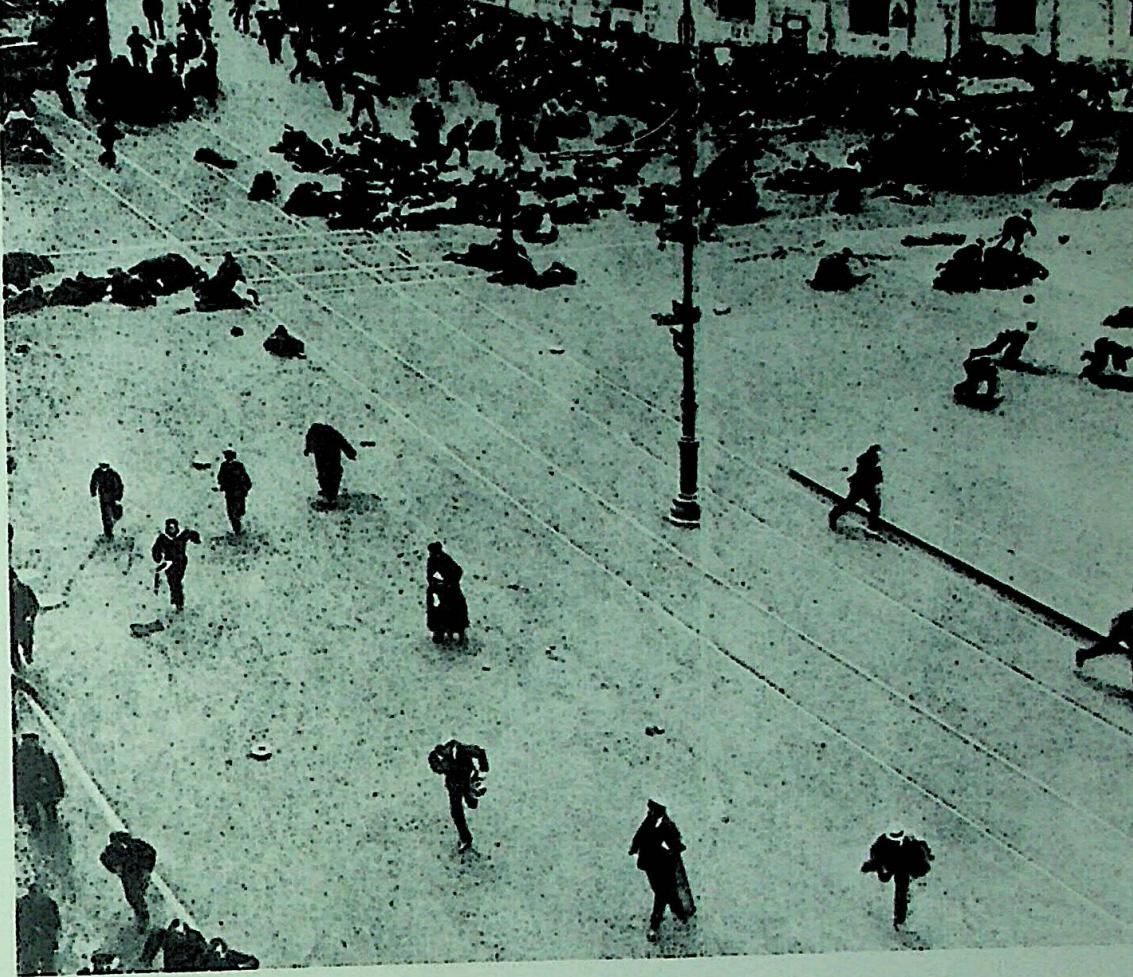
It was through the soviets, none the less—above all, through the Petrograd Soviet—that Lenin planned to bring about a Bolshevik Russia. He depicted the rivalry between the soviets and the provisional government as an elemental struggle between the forces of light and darkness, a struggle between the bourgeois order and the revolutionary proletariat. The Bolsheviks must ensure the victory of the soviets in this struggle ('All power to the soviets!') whilst at the same time winning control of the soviets themselves.

#### **'Peace, bread, and land'**

Despite the small size of their following in March 1917, the Bolsheviks possessed one overwhelming advantage over all their rivals. That advantage was the leadership of Lenin, the greatest political genius in Russian history. Without Lenin, a Bolshevik victory in 1917 would have been unthinkable.

When Lenin returned from exile in April, he found the Bolsheviks agreed on a policy of 'vigilant control' over the provisional government and contemplating co-operation with the Mensheviks. The first condition of the strategy which Lenin succeeded in

Right: the 'July Days' in Petrograd, 1917. The failure of the rising, and the widespread belief that it had been organised by Lenin on instructions from Germany, seemed to end all immediate hope of a Bolshevik coup d'état. To Sukhanov, one of the chief chroniclers of the Bolshevik revolution, it seemed that 'the vast energies of the revolution had been squandered in vain'.



imposing on his followers was that, on the contrary, they should adopt a policy of total opposition to the government and refuse all co-operation with other parties. The wisdom of this policy became clear in May when the Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries joined the provisional government. While their rivals became increasingly compromised by the government's growing unpopularity, the Bolsheviks were able to claim that they alone put forward a truly independent programme.

The Bolshevik programme was based on the three simple slogans—peace, bread, and land—which Lenin had formulated on his return from exile. No party could be against bread but, until Lenin's return, the Bolsheviks had been committed to neither peace nor land. Lenin himself had spoken many times in the past in favour of the nationalisation of land as well as industry. The proposal that large estates be shared among the peasantry, which Lenin put forward in April 1917, was a policy borrowed by him from the Social Revolutionaries for the sole purpose of winning peasant support. After the March revolution the break-up of large estates was recognised as essential, even by most members of the provisional government. With the single exception of the Bolsheviks, however, all parties were agreed that an immediate redistribution of the land would risk paralysis of the war effort, and was therefore impossible. Only the Bolsheviks demanded land for the peasant now.

As long as the war had been conducted by

a tsarist government, most Russian socialists had condemned it as an imperialist adventure. Once the tsar had been overthrown, however, the issues no longer seemed as simple. Both Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries declared their support for 'peace without annexations and without indemnities'. Since there was no prospect of concluding a peace, this policy meant, in practice, reluctant support for a continuation of the war—an attitude shared at first by most Bolsheviks. The slogan 'Down with War!', wrote Joseph Stalin, the editor of *Pravda*, at the end of March, was irrelevant to the present situation. From the moment that Lenin returned to Petrograd, however, he demanded fraternisation with the enemy and peace without a moment's delay.

For three months after Lenin's return Bolshevik support grew steadily both in the towns and in the army. Though they remained unable to reach the peasants in the villages, their policies won over large numbers of peasants at the front. Bolshevik party members in the army increased from 20,000 in February to 200,000 in July. During July the growth of support for Bolsheviks persuaded a group of Lenin's followers, against Lenin's wishes, to attempt an unsuccessful coup d'état. The failure of the insurrection (which Lenin considered premature) and the publication of forged documents, alleging that Lenin was a German spy produced a popular reaction against him, and reduced the fortunes of the Bolshevik party to their lowest ebb since the March Revolution. Lenin himself had

no option but to return to exile—this time in Finland.

#### The Bolsheviks seize power

It was not long before the Bolsheviks succeeded in re-establishing their position. While the provisional government was restoring order in Petrograd after the Bolshevik rising, General Brusilov was launching a massive new offensive on the Eastern Front in the hope of repeating his successes of the previous year. The collapse of this offensive meant the effective disintegration of the Russian army. By October there were no less than two million deserters. 'The soldiers', as Lenin said, 'voted for peace with their feet'. In the countryside the peasants were already dividing noble estates among themselves.

In September, alarmed at the collapse of the government's authority, General Kornilov, the Russian commander-in-chief, attempted to seize power. To defend Petrograd the provisional government was forced to appeal for Bolshevik support and to give arms to the Bolshevik Red Guards. In the event, Kornilov's troops refused even to march on Petrograd, and the insurrection collapsed without a shot being fired. Though unsuccessful, however, the rising destroyed most of the little authority which still remained in the hands of the provisional government. The Bolsheviks claimed to have saved Russia from counter-revolution and became the heroes of the hour. At the end of September they won majorities in the Petrograd and Moscow Soviets for the first time.

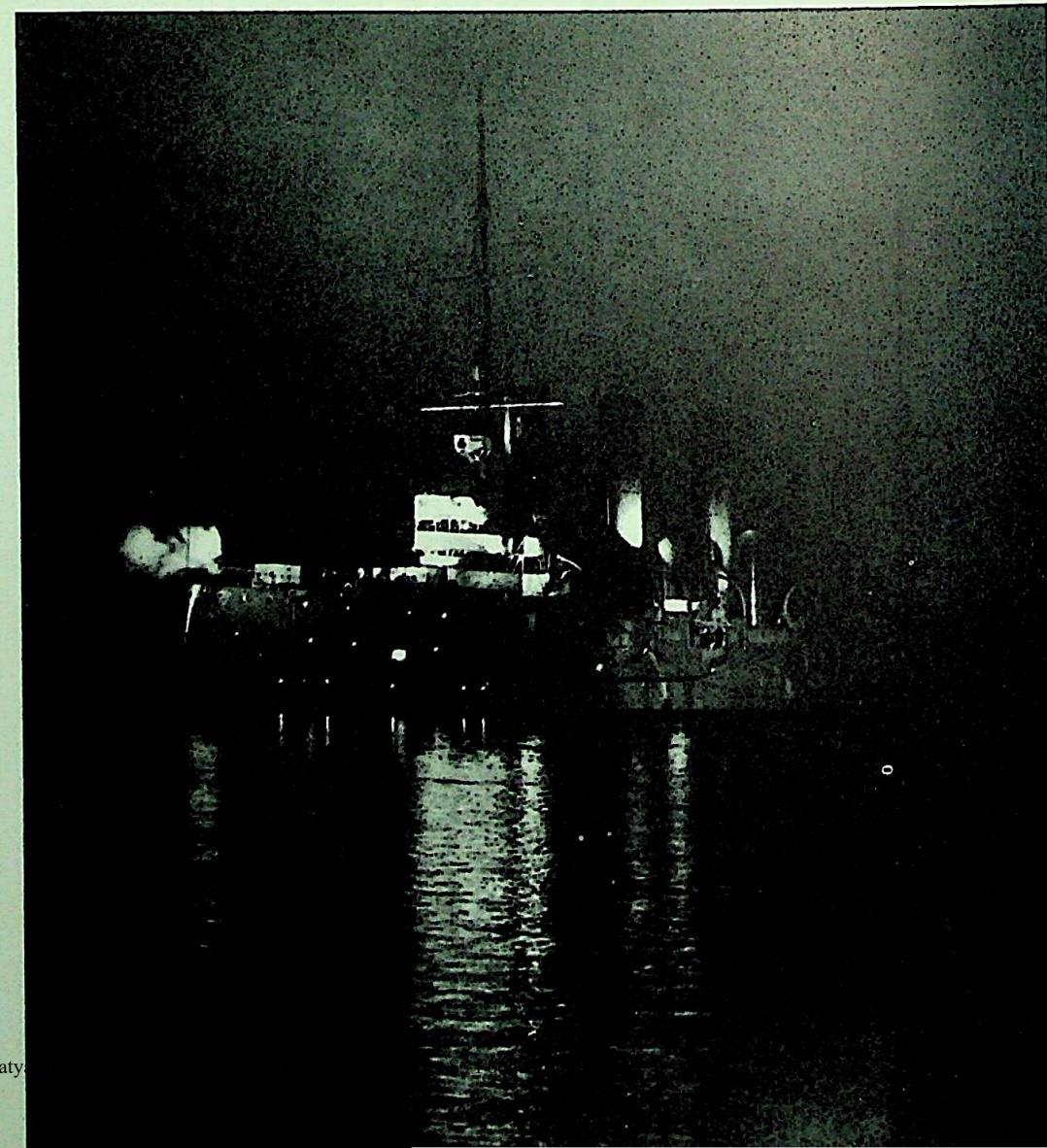
Once these majorities had been won, Lenin demanded an immediate insurrection. The Bolshevik Central Committee, however, was more cautious, and gave its consent only in the last week of October. The armed uprising itself was organised by a Military Revolutionary Committee, led by Leon Trotsky. Though Trotsky's name is now conspicuous by its absence from Russian accounts of the revolution, it was Trotsky, none the less, who was mainly responsible for the immediate success of the Bolshevik seizure of power on 6-7 November 1917 (24-5 October according to the old Russian calendar). As Stalin was to write on the first anniversary of the November Revolution, in an article which must later have embarrassed him:

'All the practical organisation of the revolution was conducted under the direct leadership of the President of the Petrograd Soviet, Comrade Trotsky. It may be said, with certainty, that the swift passing of the [Petrograd] garrison to the side of the Soviet, and the bold execution of the work of the Military Revolutionary Committee, the party owes principally and above all to Comrade Trotsky.'

Within little more than a decade, Stalin had turned himself into the chief architect of the revolution, and Trotsky into its principal opponent. Soviet historians have still to put the record straight.

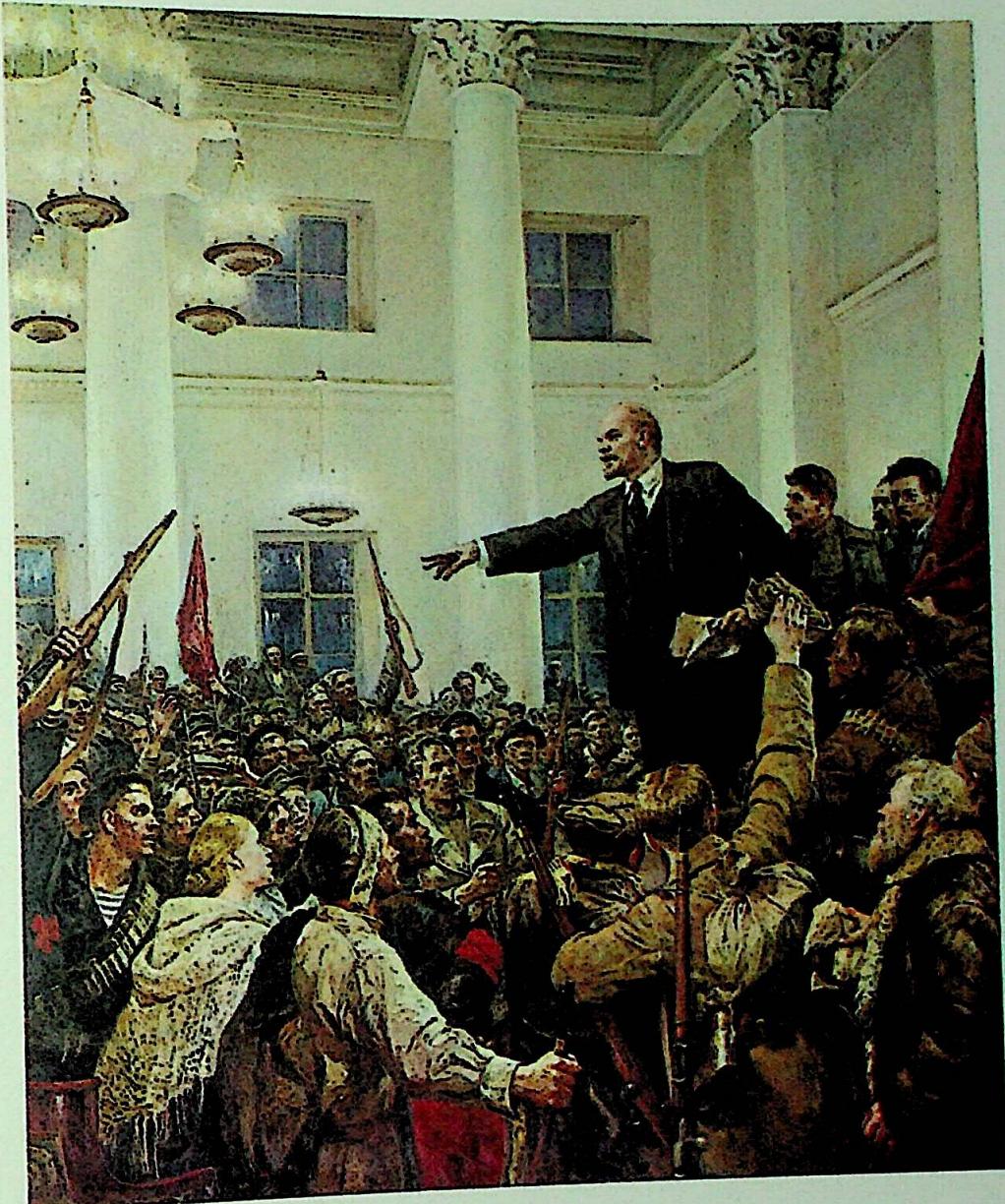
On 8 November 1917, the day after their seizure of power, the Bolsheviks issued a decree calling for 'a just and democratic peace'. In December they signed an armistice with Germany, and began peace negotiations at Brest-Litovsk. Germany demanded, as the price of a peace settlement, the dismemberment of western Russia: the cession to Germany of the Baltic provinces, White Russia, the Ukraine and the Caucasus. Lenin insisted that Russia had no option but to conclude a peace on Germany's terms. 'If you do not know how to adapt yourself', he said, 'if you are not inclined to crawl on your belly through the mud, then you are not a revolutionary but a chatterbox.'

A majority of the Bolshevik Central Committee, however, were unconvinced and wanted to continue the war rather than accept the German terms. Lenin's view prevailed only after he had twice threatened to resign. At last, on 3 March 1918, Russia signed the peace of Brest-Litovsk. Russia, Lenin argued, had suffered only a temporary reverse which would soon be swept away by the tide of revolution advancing irresistibly across the continent of Europe. In the event, however, the peace of Brest-Litovsk was to be swept away, not by the tide of revolution, but by the Allied victory on the Western Front.





*The November Revolution. Left: the cruiser Aurora gives the signal for the storming of the Winter Palace, the seat of the provisional government: a still from Eisenstein's film reconstruction. According to Soviet historians, the Aurora began the revolution with a salvo against the Winter Palace. In fact it fired a single blank. When a Russian writer mentioned this fact fifty years after the revolution, he was brusquely informed by an official commentator that the Soviet people have a right 'to poeticise their revolutionary past and that anyone trying to destroy this is undermining tradition'. Below right: a detachment of the Petrograd Red Guards who led the assault on the Winter Palace. Contrary to Soviet tradition (epitomised in the painting above), the Bolshevik coup was comparatively bloodless. The Palace was defended only by officer cadets and a women's battalion, many of whom put up little resistance. Above right: Lenin speaks to the crowd in the Winter Palace after its capture. (Lenin Museum, Prague.) Victory was followed by what Antonov-Ovseenko, the commander of the Petrograd garrison, called 'a wild and unexampled orgy', in which the palace wine cellars were extensively plundered and a number of the women's battalion raped. The orgy continued for several weeks and was brought to an end only when the Council of People's Commissars ordered the contents of the wine cellars to be pumped into the river Neva.*



## Victory in the West

The new year in 1917 began with new men, all of them promising a knock-out blow that would bring final victory on the Western Front. In England Lloyd George had replaced Asquith as prime minister at the end of the previous year. In Germany civilian government gave way to a military dictatorship under the nominal leadership of the new supreme commander, Field Marshall Hindenburg, but with the real power resting in the hands of Hindenburg's deputy, General Ludendorff. In France General Nivelle, the youngest of the French army commanders, succeeded Joffre as commander-in-chief. Nivelle produced a plan for a lightning offensive to end the war in the spring of 1917, which seduced not only the French cabinet but, more surprisingly, Lloyd George, who was usually sceptical of the claims of generals.

Ignoring most of the lessons of the last two years, Nivelle pinned his faith on the 'violence' and 'brutality' of the French onslaught. Victory, he promised, would be 'certain, swift, and small in cost': 'One and a half million Frenchmen cannot fail.' The battle began in April and continued for three weeks. When it ended Nivelle had advanced up to four miles in depth along a sixteen-mile front: a result which compared well with the gains achieved in any previous Allied offensive. But it was not the decisive victory he had promised. In May Nivelle was replaced by Pétain, the hero of Verdun.

### The French mutiny

The failure of the Nivelle offensive to achieve a breakthrough brought to a climax the demoralisation of the French army. It was followed by nothing less than a full-scale mutiny: 100,000 French soldiers were court-martialled and 23,000 found guilty. When French deserters revealed the scale of the mutiny to the Germans, their stories seemed so incredible that they were simply not believed. As a result Germany missed perhaps her best opportunity since the beginning of the war for a decisive breakthrough on the Western Front. As Painlevé, the French minister of war, later admitted: 'There did not remain more than two divisions that could be absolutely relied upon if the Germans had launched a large-scale attack.'

Pétain was faced with an immensely difficult problem. If repression was too severe, the mutiny would become a rebellion. If he were not firm enough, the army might disintegrate. Pétain's success in quelling the mutiny was one of the most remarkable achievements by any Allied general during the war. A number of soldiers were shot *pour encourager les autres* (fifty-five officially, far more unofficially), but leave was doubled and conditions at the front improved. Most important of all, the French army gained the assurance that there would be no new

French offensive for the remainder of the year. Pétain's strategy was summed up in the sentence, 'We must wait for the Americans', which meant, in effect, waiting for 1918.

### 'The battle of the mud'

Haig was undismayed by the French mutiny. 'For the last two years', he wrote in his diary at the end of May, 'most of us soldiers have realised that Great Britain must take the necessary steps to win the war by herself.' At the battle of Passchendaele, fought from July to November 1917, Haig set out to do just that. The French high command condemned the whole offensive in advance. Even Foch, though temperamentally inclined towards attack, described Haig's plan as a duck's march . . . futile, fantastic, and dangerous'.

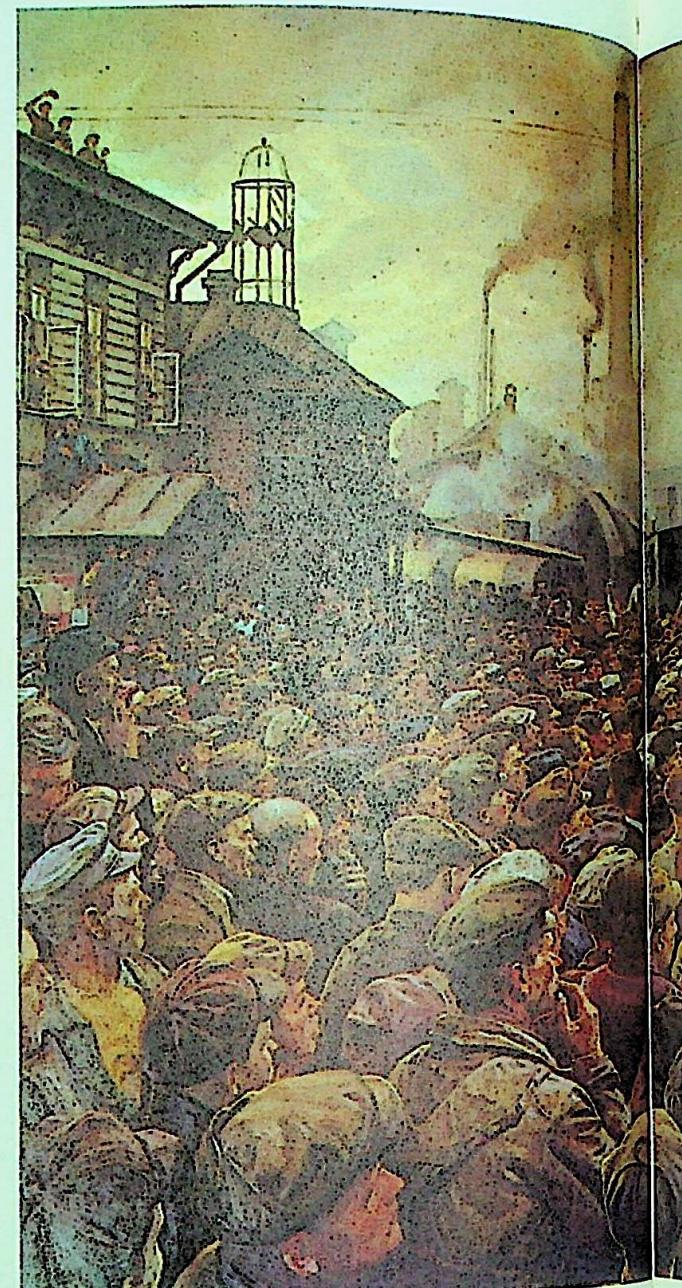
The offensive coincided with the heaviest rains for thirty years. Even more than the Somme, Passchendaele became, as Lloyd George put it, 'the battle of the mud'. At times more than a dozen men were needed to wade across the battleground with one stretcher case. Haig and his staff officers, Lloyd George wrote bitterly:

'never witnessed, not even through a telescope, the attacks [they] had ordained, except on carefully prepared charts where the advancing battalions were represented by the pencil which marched with ease across swamps and marked lines of triumphant progress without the loss of a single point. As for the mud, it never incommode the movements of the irresistible pencil.'

The few gains made in three and a half months' fighting were all to be abandoned without a fight early in 1918 in order to prepare for a new German offensive. Once again, as after the Somme, Haig pinned his faith in exaggerated estimates of German casualties and persuaded himself that he was wearing the Germans down. In fact, British casualties probably outnumbered those of Germany by more than three to two (over 300,000 as against less than 200,000)—and this at a time when Russia's withdrawal from the war was making it possible to transfer large numbers of German troops from the Eastern to the Western Front.

### The last German offensive

As a result of her victory in the east, Germany had by March 1918 twenty divisions more in France than the combined total of the Allies. Ludendorff was well aware, however, that this advantage was only a temporary one. As soon as American forces began to arrive in large numbers in France, the tables would be turned and the Allies could expect to win the war by sheer weight of numbers. Ludendorff drew the conclusion, therefore, that Germany must gamble on a last, all-out offensive, before



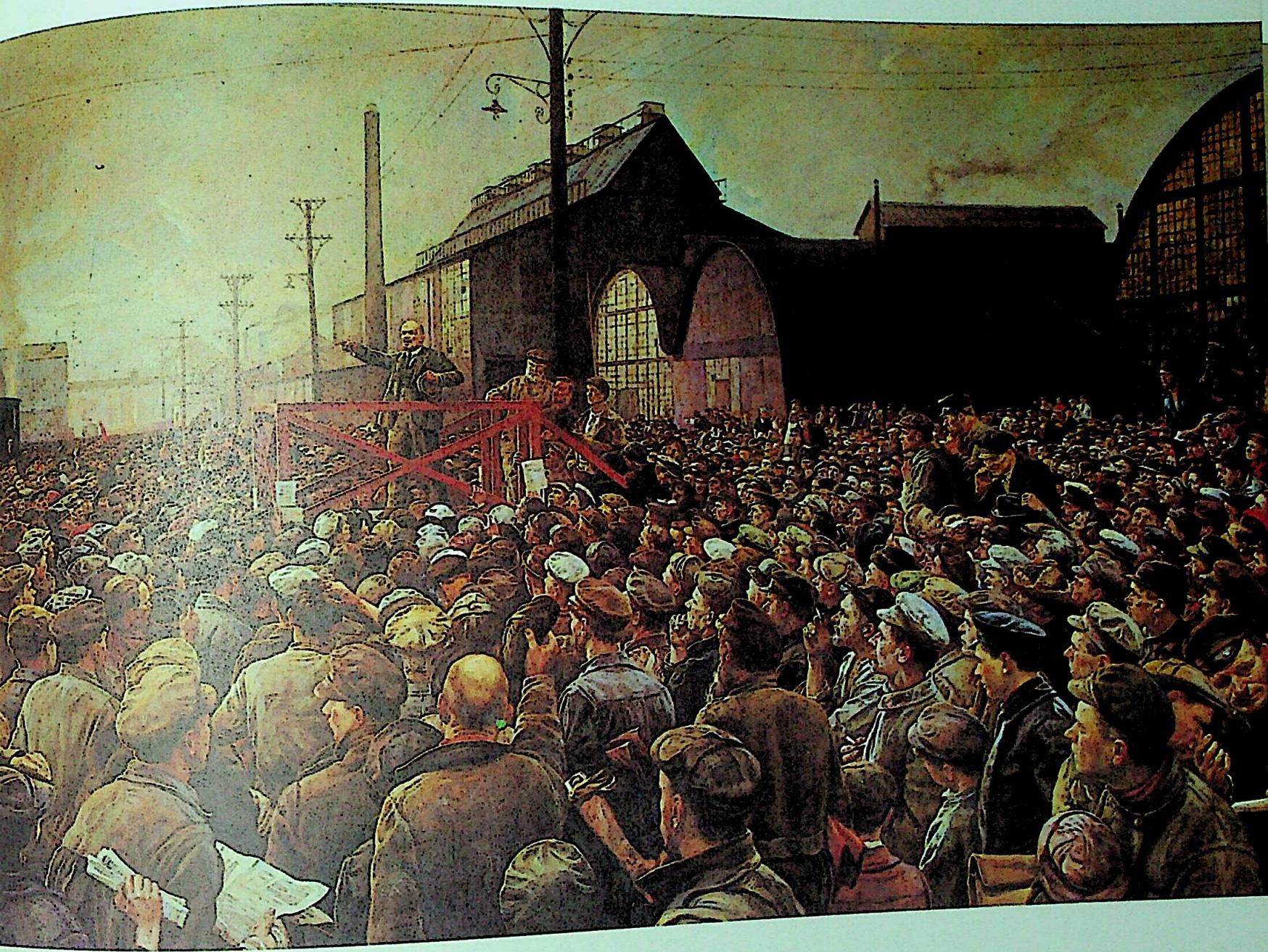
her numerical advantage was lost.

After the first few days of the German offensive, Pétain was speaking as if the war was almost over. 'The Germans', he told Clemenceau, the French prime minister, 'will beat the English in the open field, after which they will beat us too.' To Haig Pétain 'had the appearance of a commander who was in a funk and had lost his nerve'.

It was Haig's alarm at Pétain's pessimism which led the British to take the initiative, early in April, in the appointment of Foch as the first 'Commander-in-chief of the Allied armies in France'. Even Foch, however, at first seemed less than optimistic. When congratulated by Clemenceau on his appointment, he replied, 'A fine gift! You give me a lost battle and tell me to win it.' By June 1918 the Germans were once more on the Marne and threatening Paris.

### The turning of the tide

By now, though the Allies had little reason to suspect it, their greatest danger was past.



*Above: Lenin harangues workers at the Putilov factory after the November revolution. One of the most famous descriptions of Lenin at this time is that of his American admirer, John Reed:*

*'A short stocky figure with a big head set down on his shoulders, bald and bulging. Little eyes, a snub-nose, wide generous mouth, and heavy chin . . . Dressed in shabby clothes, his trousers much too long for him. Unimpressive to be the idol of a mob, loved and revered as perhaps few leaders in history have been. A strange popular leader—a leader purely by virtue of intellect; colourless, humourless, uncompromising and detached, without picturesque idiosyncrasies—but with the power of explaining profound ideas in simple terms, of analysing a concrete situation. And, combined with shrewdness, the greatest intellectual audacity'. (Lenin Museum, Moscow.)*



Despite the fact that Germany's advance far exceeded anything achieved by the Allies since the opening of the Western Front, German troops had outstripped both their transport and artillery and were incapable of pressing home their attack. During July tide of battle began to turn, at last, in favour of the Allies.

The real beginning of the German collapse was the British victory at Amiens, on 8 August. Ludendorff wrote later:

'August 8th was the blackest day for the German army in the history of the war. This was the worst experience I had to undergo. . . . Our losses had reached such proportions that the Supreme Command was faced with the necessity of having to disband a series of divisions.'

The battle of Amiens already foreshadowed the battles of World War Two. It showed, too, how far methods of warfare had evolved since the war began. When Britain went to war in August 1914, officers' swords were still being sharpened by the regimental armourer, and soldiers at the front were making home-made grenades out of empty tins of jam. At Amiens, in August 1918, British troops advanced behind a shield of tanks, protected by rudi-

mentary air cover directed from the ground by radio.

During the final Allied offensive, Haig's invincible optimism, which had hitherto been something of a liability, became instead a valuable asset. While Foch, even after the battle of Amiens, did not envisage a decisive breakthrough until April 1919, Haig was convinced that the war could, and must, be won by an all-out offensive in the autumn of 1918 before the enemy had an opportunity to recover. It was the British army, stiffened by strong divisions from Canada and Australia (the latter brilliantly commanded by General Monash), which bore the main brunt of the fighting during the final stages of the war. In the three months between the battle of Amiens and the armistice of 11 November the British army, under Haig, captured 188,700 prisoners of war and 2,840 guns—almost as many as the other Allies put together. Foch himself was full of praise for Haig's achievement. 'Never at any time in its history', he said, 'has the British army achieved greater results in attack than in this unbroken offensive.'

Germany's defeat was hastened by the collapse of her partners. The Allied forces which had been cooped up in a Balkan bridgehead at Salonika for the past three years at last succeeded in launching a

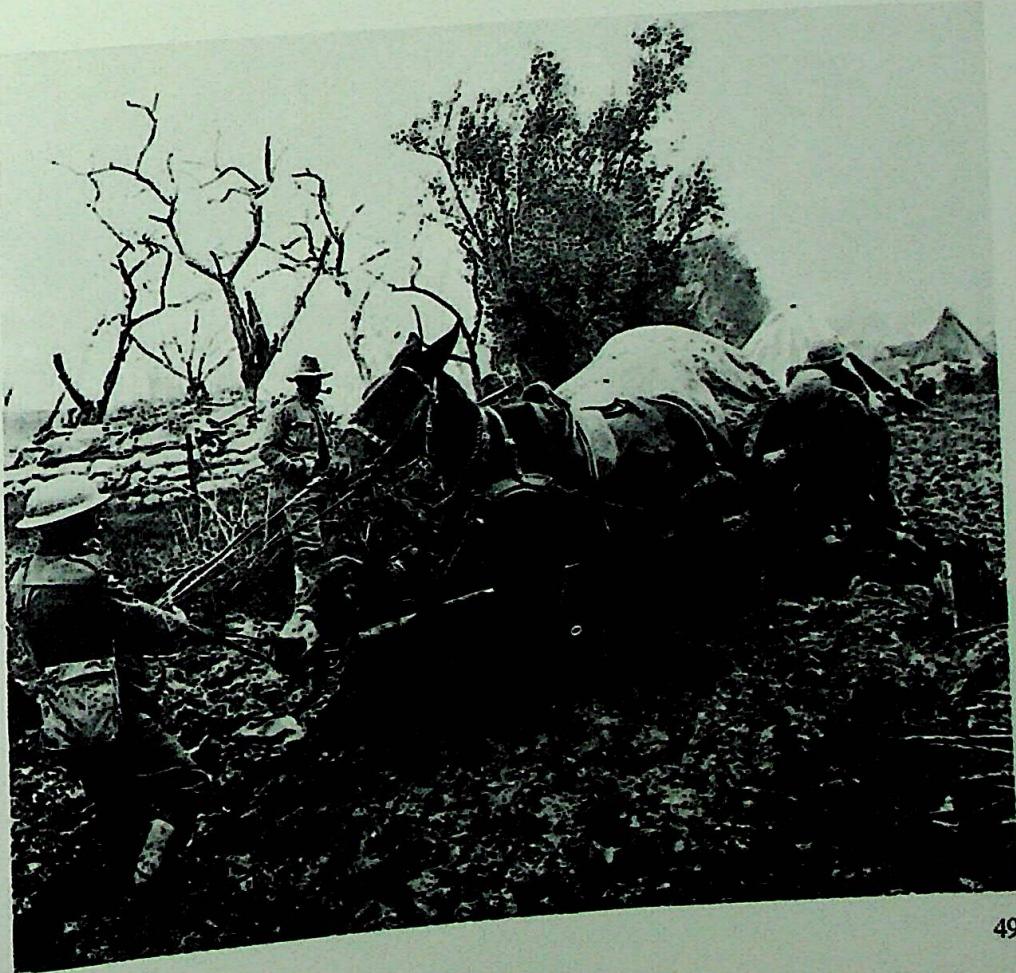
*Above : 'We are making a new world', by Paul Nash. Nash wrote to his wife in November 1917 after painting this picture: 'I am no longer an artist interested and curious, I am a messenger who will bring back word from his men who are fighting to those who want the war to go on for ever. Feeble, inarticulate will be my message, but it will have a bitter truth, and may it burn their lousy souls'. (Imperial War Museum, London.)*



Passchendaele, 1917. Above: Australian troops cross a duckboard track through the remains of Château forest.

Right: Anzac Corps supply wagon struggles through the mud. (Imperial War Museum, London.)

The battle had been in progress for four months before an officer from GHQ paid his first visit to the front. As his car approached the swamp on which the battle was fought he burst into tears, crying 'Good God, did we really send men to fight in that?' He was told that conditions at the front were even worse.



*Below: gas victims arriving at a clearing station near Béthune in April 1918. Haig, according to his son, 'felt that it was his duty to refrain from visiting the casualty clearing stations because these visits made him physically ill'.*

*Bottom: British Mark V tanks allotted to the 5th Australian division moving up for the Allied assault on the Hindenburg line, the main line of German defences. The cribs carried on top of the tanks were intended for use as stepping stones to enable the tanks to cross the wide trenches of the Hindenburg line. The decisive break in the line was made on 11 September 1918. (Imperial War Museum, London.)*

successful offensive, and forced Bulgaria to make peace at the end of September. A month later Turkey followed suit, and Austria-Hungary, already in the throes of disintegration, appealed for an armistice.

Germany's collapse was only partly caused by the defeats inflicted on her and on her Allies in the closing months of the war. It was due even more to the conviction that the success of the British blockade and the prospect of large-scale American intervention made Germany's future prospects even bleaker than the present. The longer the war continued, the more the odds would turn against Germany.

In August, at a time when Germany's

reserves were almost exhausted, the American army in Europe already numbered one and a half million men, and was increasing at the rate of 300,000 a month. When the armistice was signed on 11 November 1918, Germany had still not been invaded, and her front line still lay on French and Belgian soil. Germany capitulated, not because she had been beaten in the field, but because her people and her leaders had lost hope for the future.

Victory, wrote Churchill, had been 'bought so dear as to be almost indistinguishable from defeat'. The war had killed not less than ten million people and maimed as many more. All the great powers of Europe felt, like Britain, that they had lost a generation. The mood of the British people now was very different from the enthusiastic jingoism of August 1914. Once the victory celebrations were over, the overwhelming feeling of the nation was that 'it must never happen again'. The young idealists who had flocked to the colours in 1914, hoping to find at the front a sense of purpose that had been lacking in peace, returned (if they returned at all) overwhelmed instead by the futility of war. The proud, patriotic poetry of Rupert Brooke had given way to the bitter, disillusioned verse of Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon.

Many men in the years between the wars sought to blame the enormous carnage that Europe had endured, not on the necessities of war, but on the stupidity of generals. And yet, despite the errors of the generals, victory could not have been achieved without the sacrifice of millions of lives. Without the experience of the terrible battles of the past four years, the German army would not, in November 1918, have lost the will to resist. Despite the enormous technological advances of the next twenty years, no easier way to defeat Germany was discovered during the Second World War. Before Germany could be defeated for a second time in 1945, the massacres of Verdun, and the Somme, and Passchendaele were to be repeated at Leningrad, and Stalingrad and Moscow.



*Right: American forces fighting in the Saint-Mihiel salient south of Verdun in September 1918. In two days they took 14,500 German prisoners and 440 German guns. But it was the potential contribution of American forces to the war if it continued, rather than their actual achievements, which persuaded Ludendorff that the German cause was hopeless. (Musée de l'Armée, Paris.)*

*The final Allied offensive.*

*Below: German prisoners captured by the British 4th Army at the battle of Amiens, August 1918. Within a few months the Kaiser was to lose his throne. When it became clear in November that the Allies would not agree to an armistice while he remained in power, his generals forced him to abdicate and seek refuge in Holland. (Imperial War Museum, London.)*





## Post-war Europe

*Germany is conquered and the European victors seek vengeance; Wilson and Lenin offer instead their own Utopian visions of the future; the United States rejects Wilson's plan for a new world community; Europe rejects Lenin's call to revolution.*

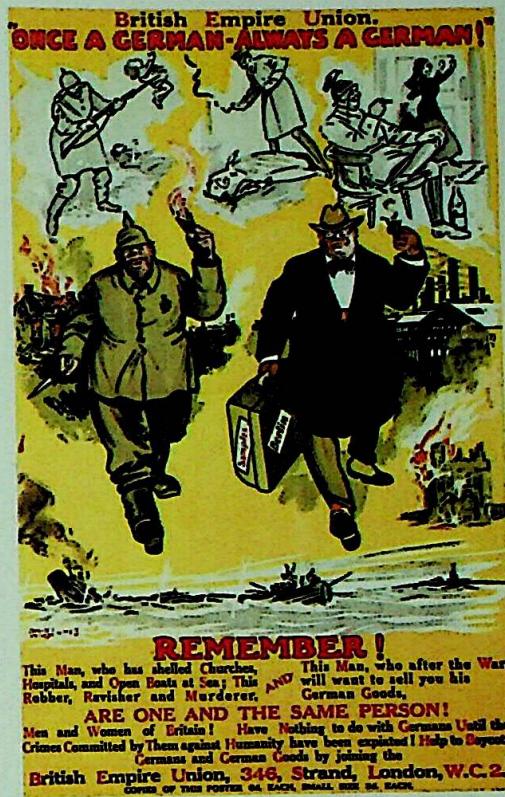
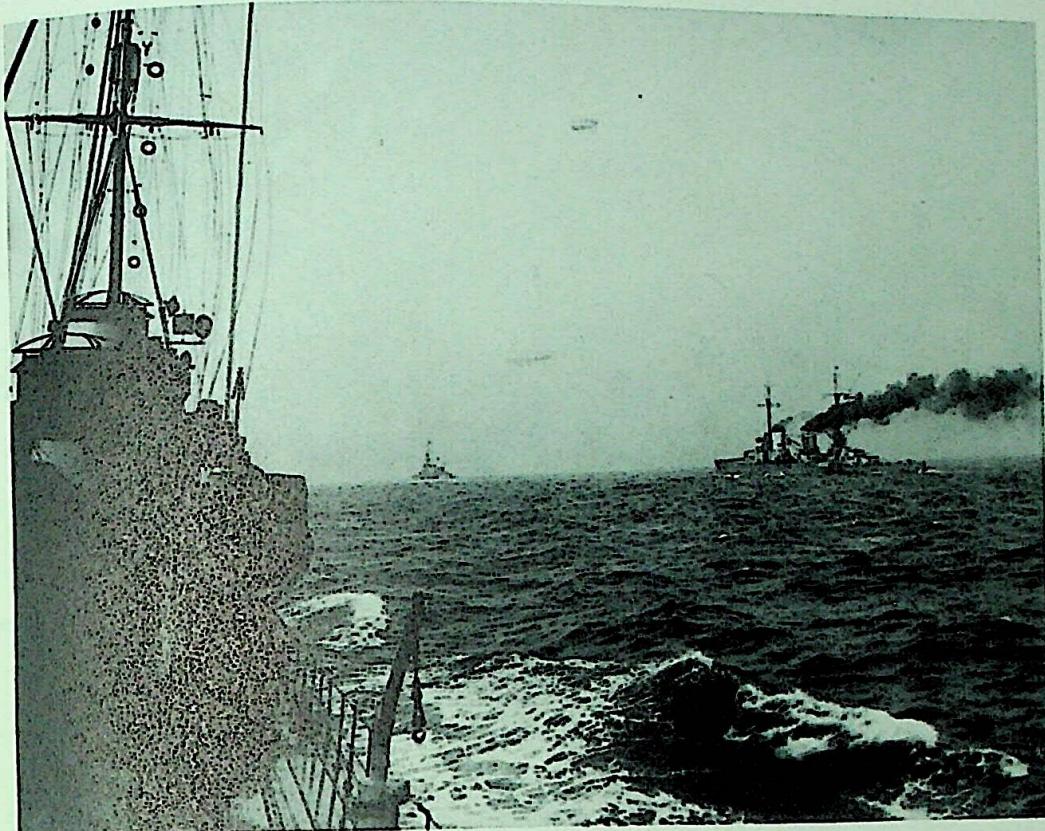
### The treaty of Versailles

President Wilson came to Europe in January 1919 expecting to build a new Europe on the ruins of the old, founded on the principles of national self-determination and the rule of law, with a League of Nations to uphold the peace. The rapturous reception given him by the peoples of Europe assured him of their confidence. When he visited London, rose petals were strewn before him. Wilson expected opposition from the Allied governments, but was confident that he could overcome it. 'England and France', he had written in the summer of 1917, 'have

not the same views with regard to peace that we have by any means. When the war is over, we can force them to our way of thinking....' England and France, however, were to prove less pliable than he supposed.

The basis of the post-war settlement was the treaty of Versailles, negotiated at the peace conference of Paris, during the first six months of 1919. Unlike most such gatherings in the past, the Paris conference was not a conference between victor and vanquished. It was a conference instead where the victors decided, amongst themselves, the terms which were to be imposed upon the enemy. The details of the settle-

*Above: 'The signing of peace in the Hall of Mirrors, Versailles, 28 June 1919' by Sir William Orpen R.A. Orpen's painting shows the German delegation signing the treaty. Opposite them, between the two central pillars, are the Big Three: Wilson, Clemenceau, and Lloyd George. (Imperial War Museum, London.)*



ment were worked out by a series of more than fifty commissions, which held between them more than 1,600 sessions. Thirty-two states took part in these discussions, amongst them countries as remote from the fighting as Ecuador and Siam. All the major decisions, however, were taken by three men — Wilson, Lloyd George, and Clemenceau, the 'Big Three'.

### The problem of French security

Two major difficulties stood in the way of the peace without annexations or indemnities which Wilson had come to build. The first was the problem of French security. There is almost no other example in the history of modern Europe of a nation so exhausted by its victory as France appeared to be in November 1918. Britain's security seemed to have been secured by the surrender of the German fleet at the armistice and the conquest of the German colonies during the war, most of which were soon to be shared out between Britain and the dominions.

France, however, seemed to have won something of a Pyrrhic victory. Most of the destruction caused by the battles on the Western Front had been concentrated on French soil, and some of France's principal industries had been ruined. Worse still, with the lowest birth rate of any of the great powers, France had less chance than any other nation of making up its enormous losses in manpower. Even with the recovery of Alsace-Lorraine, France still remained far weaker, both in population and economic resources, than a defeated Germany. Moreover, the alliance with Russia, on

which its security against Germany had formerly depended, had been swept away by the Bolshevik revolution.

Despite its victory in the First World War, therefore, the balance of power actually seemed more unfavourable to France at the end of war than at the beginning. Clemenceau at first insisted that the only way to make France secure was to separate the Rhineland from Germany, and give France permanent bridgeheads on the right flank of the Rhine. Both Wilson and Lloyd George refused to consider such a scheme. Instead, they made two alternative proposals: first, an Allied occupation of the Rhineland for fifteen years, together with the permanent demilitarisation both of the Rhineland itself and a region fifty kilometres wide on the right bank of the Rhine; secondly, an occupation of the Saar, also for fifteen years (with its coal-mines ceded to France for that period), followed by a plebiscite to decide whether it should go to France or Germany.

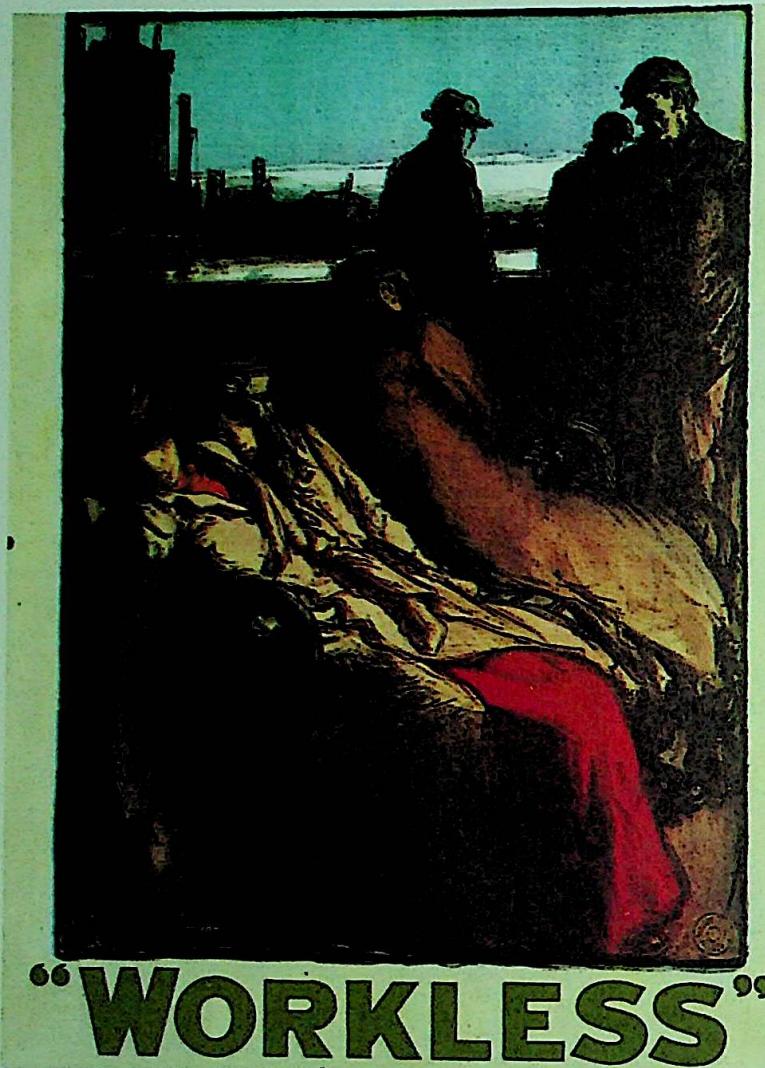
France was persuaded to accept these terms only by an Anglo-American promise of immediate armed assistance against any German attack. This promise, however, was not to be honoured. The American Senate later refused to ratify the Versailles treaty, and Britain declared herself thereby released from her own undertaking to France.

### 'Make Germany Pay!'

The second great obstacle in the way of Wilson's hope for a peace without victors was the demand for reparations. Public opinion in both France and Britain was in vengeful mood at the moment of victory.

*Above left: the surrender of the German fleet, 21 November 1918. The internment of the fleet at Scapa Flow was followed by a long dispute among the Allies over how to dispose of it, with Britain and the United States resisting French and Italian demands that a large part of the fleet be handed over to them. The dispute was resolved a week before the signing of the Versailles treaty when Admiral von Reuter, the commander of the interned fleet, unexpectedly scuttled his ships rather than see them fall into Allied hands.*

*Above: 'Once a German—always a German!' At the beginning of the twentieth century France, and not Germany, had been regarded as England's traditional enemy. The First World War, however, confirmed in the British people a deep distrust of the German national character: a distrust later reinforced by the rise of Adolf Hitler. Most British people at the beginning of the Second World War probably shared Duff Cooper's belief that: 'There is something innate in the German character which renders the German people liable to accept that particular form of bad government which leads the war'. (Musée Royal de L'armée, Paris.)*



## "WORKLESS"

The election campaign which returned Lloyd George to power in December 1918 was conducted amid cries of 'Hang the Kaiser' and 'Make Germany Pay', orchestrated by conservative politicians and Lord Northcliffe's newspapers. Sir Eric Geddes, the First Lord of the Admiralty, assured his electors that the government would squeeze Germany 'until you can hear the pips squeak'. Even Lloyd George, though personally anxious to limit the extent of Germany's humiliation, felt compelled to promise that Britain would 'demand the whole cost of the war' in compensation.

Despite the cries for vengeance which surrounded it, the demand for reparations was perfectly justified. It was reasonable to expect that Germany, as the aggressor, should pay a proportion of the appalling losses inflicted by it on the rest of Europe—all the more so since its own economic losses had been lighter than those of most of its opponents.

Where the Allies were unwise was not in their demand for reparations but in the amount that they demanded, and in the way that their demand was phrased. Since they were unable to agree among themselves on the size of reparations, they forced Germany to sign what amounted to a blank cheque. Then, in order to justify this blank cheque, they included in the Versailles

treaty the famous war guilt clause, drafted by the young John Foster Dulles (later one of America's least successful secretaries of state):

'The Allied and Associated Governments affirm and Germany accepts the responsibility of Germany and her allies for causing all the loss and damage to which the Allied and Associated Governments and their nationals have been subjected as a consequence of the war imposed upon them by the aggression of Germany and her allies.'

That Germany should be forced to sign such a declaration was bound to be bitterly resented by the great majority of the German people as a gratuitous insult to the memory of the German dead. Outside Germany itself, the justification for reparations—'the responsibility of Germany and her allies' for the outbreak of the First World War—is no longer seriously disputed. Most West German schoolchildren are still taught, however, that responsibility for the war was divided, more or less evenly, among all its main participants.

A peace 'too mild for its severity'  
The peace with Germany was, in the words of one of its French critics, 'too mild for its severity'. In certain respects the peace was



OVERWEIGHTED.

PRESIDENT WILSON. "HERE'S YOUR OLIVE BRANCH. NOW GET BUSY."  
DOVE OF PEACE. "OF COURSE I WANT TO PLEASE EVERYBODY; BUT ISN'T THIS A BIT THICK?"

*Above left: post-war Britain: At the end of the war Lloyd George had promised 'a fit land for heroes to live in'. During the next few years, as this Labour party poster implies, this and similar promises turned increasingly sour. When Ramsay MacDonald's first Labour government came to power in January 1924 there were still well over two million unemployed.*

*Above: Wilson entrusts the peace of the world to the League of Nations. 'I can predict with absolute certainty', he told the American people in 1919, 'that within another generation there will be another world war if the nations of the world do not concert the methods by which to prevent it'.*

*Right: the re-settlement of Europe. Forms of government changed as much as boundaries. In 1914 France had been the only republic among the great powers of Europe; by 1919 Britain was the only monarchy.*



severe. Germany lost its colonies, its air force, most of its fleet, all its army save 100,000 men, and over 13 per cent of its territory (though most of its territorial losses, like the surrender of Polish territory or the return of Alsace-Lorraine to France, could be justified by the principle of self-determination). In addition, Germany was faced with a war indemnity, which it was expected to take half a century to pay. And yet the fundamental bases of German strength—the unity achieved by Bismarck in 1871, the great size of its population (even though diminished by 10 per cent), and the industrial strength which had given it in 1914 the most advanced economy in Europe—remained essentially unchanged. These were the factors which, before 1914, had made Germany incomparably the most powerful state on the continent of Europe. Sooner or later, it was inevitable that they should do so again.

France, Germany's main rival in western Europe, was destined to fall behind Germany economically and demographically even more rapidly after the First World War than it had done before. Already, in 1919, many French critics of Versailles advanced the thesis which was to become widely accepted after the Second World War: that European security demanded the sacrifice of the unity achieved in 1871 and the re-creation of a divided Germany.

Having failed to secure the peace without victors which he had come to build, Wilson pinned his faith instead on the League of Nations. Increasingly, as the Paris negotiations dragged on, he came to look on the League as a means whereby injustices in the peace with Germany, which he was powerless to prevent, could be put right as soon as the passions aroused by the war had died down. For that reason, he insisted that the Covenant of the League of Nations be incorporated in the Versailles settlement itself. One of the articles of the Covenant contained express provision for 'the reconsideration of treaties which have become inapplicable', and the consideration of 'international conditions whose continuance might endanger the peace of the world'. The treaty of Versailles, even if imperfect, contained, in Wilson's view, the eventual remedy for its own imperfections.

**The United States rejects the treaty**  
Presenting the text of the Versailles treaty to the Senate after his return to the United States in July 1919, Wilson acknowledged that it contained many inadequacies. But he argued that these were redeemed by the Covenant which conferred on America the moral leadership of all mankind. He ended his speech with a remarkable peroration full of Wilsonian idealism:

'The stage is set, the destiny disclosed. It has come about by no plan of our own conceiving, but by the hand of God who led us



into this way. We cannot turn back. We can only go forward, with lifted eyes and freshened spirit, to follow the vision. It was this that we dreamed at our birth. America shall in truth show the way. The light streams upon the path ahead, and nowhere else.'

The United States, however, refused Wilson's summons 'to follow the vision'. Mainly because of objections to the Covenant of the League, the Senate refused to give the two-thirds majority required to ratify the treaty of Versailles. That America failed to join the League of Nations was due not merely to Wilson's opponents but also to Wilson himself. The Senate was probably prepared to accept the Covenant with reser-

vations which were no greater than those which most members of the League were in any case to exercise in practice. But Wilson was in no mood to repeat in Washington the kind of compromises which had been forced on him in Paris. All those who opposed him he denounced as 'contemptible quitters'. When officially informed by the French ambassador that the Allies were prepared to accept the reservations on American membership of the League demanded by an influential group of Republican senators, Wilson replied, 'Mr Ambassador, I shall consent to nothing. The Senate must take its medicine.' The Senate, however, refused to take its medicine; and the American people, by electing Warren

*The Bolsheviks look forward to the coming of the world revolution.*  
*Left: the proletariat joins battle with the monster of world imperialism. (Lenin Museum, Moscow.)*  
*Below: a Soviet worker welcomes delegates to a meeting of the Communist International: in the background is the communist Utopia.*



Harding as their president in 1920, endorsed its decision.

### The reshaping of eastern Europe

The second great task of the Paris peacemakers, after the peace with Germany, was the resettlement of eastern Europe. The almost simultaneous defeat of the Russian, German, and Austrian empires meant, in effect, that the whole map of eastern Europe, from Finland in the north to the Black Sea in the south, had to be redrawn. The new map of eastern Europe took a year to make, and was established by the Allies in three separate treaties: with Austria in September 1919, with Bulgaria in November 1919, and with Hungary in June 1920.

The Baltic states of Finland, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, formerly parts of the Russian Empire, all gained their independence. Poland, which in the seventeenth century had been a major European power, and in the eighteenth had been divided by its neighbours, was reconstituted as an independent state. The Austrian Empire was divided among half a dozen 'succession states', of which Austria and Hungary, formerly the two centres of power within the empire, were the smallest.

The guiding principle which underlay the resettlement of eastern Europe was the principle of nationality. Boundaries between states were to coincide as far as possible with boundaries between peoples. This principle was modified in practice by two other considerations. It was, doubtless, inevitable that Germany's allies in eastern Europe—Austria, Hungary, and Bulgaria—should be less fairly treated than their neighbours, but it was difficult to justify either the annexation of German-speaking Austrian South Tyrol by Italy, or the inclusion of large Magyar minorities in the territory of Hungary's neighbours. The second factor which limited the application of the principle of nationality was fear of revolution. All the 'Big Three' were agreed on the need to make Russia's neighbours as large and strong as possible—even at the cost of including in them large alien minorities—in order to strengthen their ability to resist the westwards march of Bolshevism.

### The menace of Bolshevism

No Bolshevik had ever imagined that the revolution in Russia could be other than part of a world revolutionary movement. Early in 1919, Zinoviev, the head of the Communist International, forecast that 'within a year all Europe will be communist'. It is easy now to dismiss such predictions as hopelessly unrealistic. At the time they were taken very seriously indeed. 'Bolshevism', wrote Wilson, soon after he arrived in Europe, 'is moving steadily westward, has overwhelmed Poland, and is poisoning Germany.'



Many other statesmen at the Paris conference feared that the foundations of European society, as they knew it, were crumbling before their eyes. Lloyd George wrote in March:

'The whole of Europe is filled with the spirit of Revolution. The whole existing order in its political, social, and economic aspects is questioned by the masses of the population from one end of Europe to the other.'

Fear of the spread of Bolshevism was strengthened still further when a communist regime, led by Bela Kun, seized power in Hungary for a few months in the spring and summer of 1919. Even though an attempted communist rising in Berlin had been bloodily suppressed at the beginning of 1919, many European statesmen, like Lloyd George, saw a real danger that Germany might yet go the way of Hungary, and bring the whole of central and eastern Europe within the Bolshevik orbit.

This fear continued to play upon the minds of the peacemakers throughout the negotiations of 1919. Secret offices were set up in New Scotland Yard and the American State Department to chart the course of Bolshevism as its poison spread through Europe. Ray Stannard Baker, one of Wilson's advisers at Paris, wrote later that the Bolsheviks 'without being represented at Paris at all, were important elements at every turn'. During 1919, western opinion was already coming round to the view expressed by Sir Henry Wilson, the British chief of staff, that 'our real danger is not the Boches but Bolshevism'.

### The Civil War in Russia

While Allied statesmen were pondering the Bolshevik menace at the Paris conference, Russia itself was passing through a period of internal chaos usually, but inadequately, described as the 'Civil War'. The Bolsheviks were challenged by 'White' armies, attack-



ing from three sides: from Siberia, the Gulf of Finland and the Caucasus.

That the Bolsheviks survived these attacks was due, in part, to Trotsky's brilliant leadership of the Red Army. Their survival owed even more, however, to the failures and divisions of their opponents, some of whom even fell to fighting amongst themselves. Increasingly, the White armies fell under the control of men of the old, discredited ruling class, hostile not merely to Bolshevism but to the March Revolution. Among the Russian peasant masses, on whom, in the last resort, the outcome of the war depended, the conviction grew that the Bolsheviks were fighting for the people of Russia against White generals whose only programme was reaction, and whose only interest was the restoration of their own former privileges.

The chaos of the Civil War offered western governments an opportunity which was never to return for reversing the decision of the November Revolution. Two or three Allied divisions landed in the Gulf of Finland in 1919 could probably have forced their way to Moscow (the new capital of Russia) and overthrown the Bolshevik regime. But in the aftermath of the First World War not even two or three divisions could be found. In none of the Allied countries was public opinion prepared to tolerate intervention on more than a token scale. Those troops which were sent served mainly to discredit the White cause still further. They were too few to affect the outcome of the war, but sufficient to allow the Bolsheviks to brand their opponents as the tools of western imperialism.

By the beginning of 1920 the White

forces, though not finally defeated, no longer seemed a serious threat to the Bolshevik regime. In April the Civil War within Russia itself became overshadowed by the beginning of war with Poland. The Poles invaded Russia, nominally in support of Ukrainian nationalists, but with the real intention of acquiring the Ukraine for Poland. Within two months the Polish invasion of Russia had given way to a Russian invasion of Poland, followed by the creation of a provisional government of Polish communists.

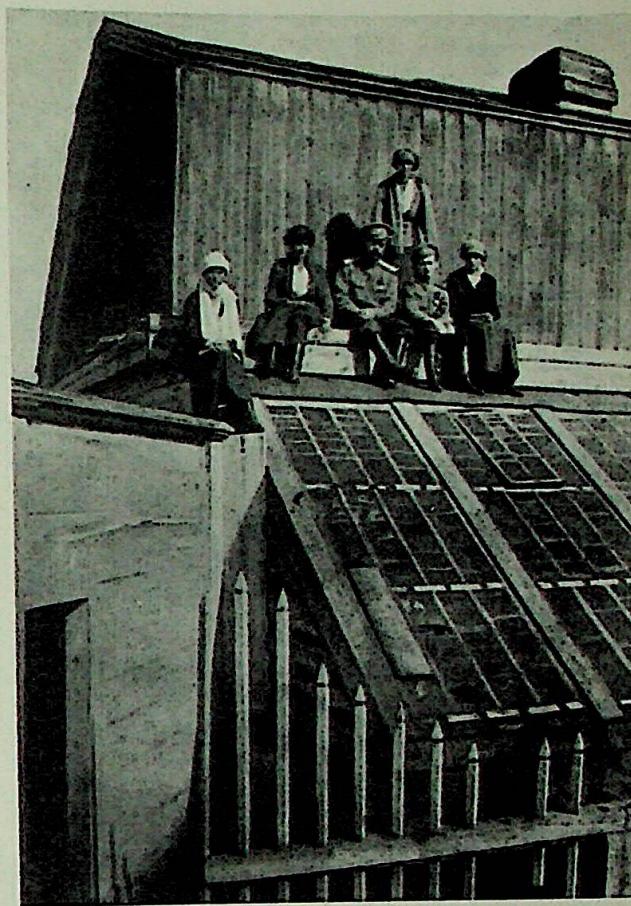
For a few months in the summer of 1920 many Bolsheviks believed that they were engaged in building a Soviet Poland which would push the borders of Bolshevism to the frontiers of Germany, and enable the German communists, with Russian help, to make a successful bid for power. Churchill, amongst others, was afraid they might succeed. In July 1920 he published an article in the *Evening News* luridly entitled 'The Poison Peril from the East', appealing to the Germans to build, before it was too late, 'a dyke of peaceful, lawful, patient strength and virtue against the flood of red barbarism flowing from the East.' By so doing, he assured them, they would find their way 'as the years pass by back to their own great place in the councils of Christendom'.

*Far left: Leon Trotsky as commissar for war. For his leadership of the Red Army in the Civil War he was hailed by the Bolsheviks as the father of victory. Trotsky himself gave the credit to the political commissars in the army 'who enjoy no caste privilege and could die and teach others to die for the cause of the working class'.*

*The Russian Civil War. Left: soldiers of the Red Army in 1918, reading news sheets optimistically entitled 'To Victory!' Because of the desperate shortage of equipment recruits were often asked, as this picture shows, to provide their own clothing. Trotsky*

In August 1920 the victorious Russian advance was brought to a halt. The Poles, with French assistance, inflicted a decisive defeat on the Red Army at the battle of Warsaw and began a successful counter-offensive which carried them, once again, across the Russian border. In March 1921 the Russians were forced, by the Treaty of Riga, to leave six million Ukrainians and White Russians in Polish hands. The failure of the Red Army in Poland ended all immediate hope of a European revolution, and caused a sharp decline in the Bolsheviks' international prestige. In the year after the treaty of Riga the Italian and Czech communist parties lost more than half their members, the French almost half, and the German about a third.

Only in the aftermath of the next European war was Bolshevism able to resume the conquest of eastern Europe. It succeeded after 1945 where it failed after 1918, less because its ideological appeal had become more persuasive than because its military strength was now immeasurably greater. Between the wars, however, the most serious threat to liberal democracy in Europe came, not from Russian communism but from the new menace of fascism, which emerged most rapidly in Italy and more slowly, though in a more vicious form.



wrote later of the situation in the summer of 1918: 'One unconsciously asked oneself the question whether the life forces of the exhausted, shattered, despairing land would last until the new regime had established itself.'

*Above right: the tsar and his family in captivity at Tobolsk after the Bolshevik revolution. In July 1918 they were murdered by their guards.*

*Below left: 'Revolution' by Marc Chagall: Lenin balances on one hand between a political uprising (on the left) and the artistic and human revolution which Chagall*

imagines as its sequel (on the right). For eighteen months after the revolution Chagall was Commissar for Art in Vitebsk, confident at first that he had an opportunity such as few artists had ever possessed before 'to bring art down into the street'. He was swiftly disillusioned. 'Let us not be ridiculous!' was the heading of an attack on him in the local party newspaper. His dream-like imagery was singled out for especial censure: 'Why is the cow green and why is the horse flying in the sky? What has that to do with Marx and Lenin?' In 1922 Chagall left Russia for the West. (Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.)



in Germany. Without the fears aroused by Bolshevism, however, fascism would have been much less serious a menace. Fascism owed its initial impetus in Italy to a panic fear of revolution. The Nazis sought to exploit the same fear in Germany. 'My ambition', said Adolf Hitler after his first, and unsuccessful, bid for power in 1923, 'was to become the destroyer of Marxism. I am going to achieve this task.'

### The birth of the Weimar Republic

On 14 August 1919 Germany became a democracy. The first article of the Weimar constitution (named after the city of its birth) proclaimed: 'The German Reich is a Republic. Political authority derives from the people.' Its drafters attempted to com-

bine in the new constitution all the best features of the British Bill of Rights, the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen, and the first Ten Amendments of the American Constitution. In all but one of its articles it was a model of democracy. The solitary exception was article 48, which allowed the president (who in normal circumstances reigned but did not rule) to confer absolute power on the chancellor 'if public order and security are seriously disturbed or endangered'. Three chancellors during the final years of the Weimar Republic assumed absolute power under the provisions of article 48. The last was Adolf Hitler.

The Weimar Republic was aptly described by its first chancellor as a candle burning at both ends. The right, which propagated the myth that the politicians, not the generals, were responsible for the capitulation of 1918, regarded the new republic as both the product and the instrument of Germany's shame. The communists, too, were dedicated to its destruction. From its supporters the Weimar Republic never received more than a lukewarm loyalty. From its opponents

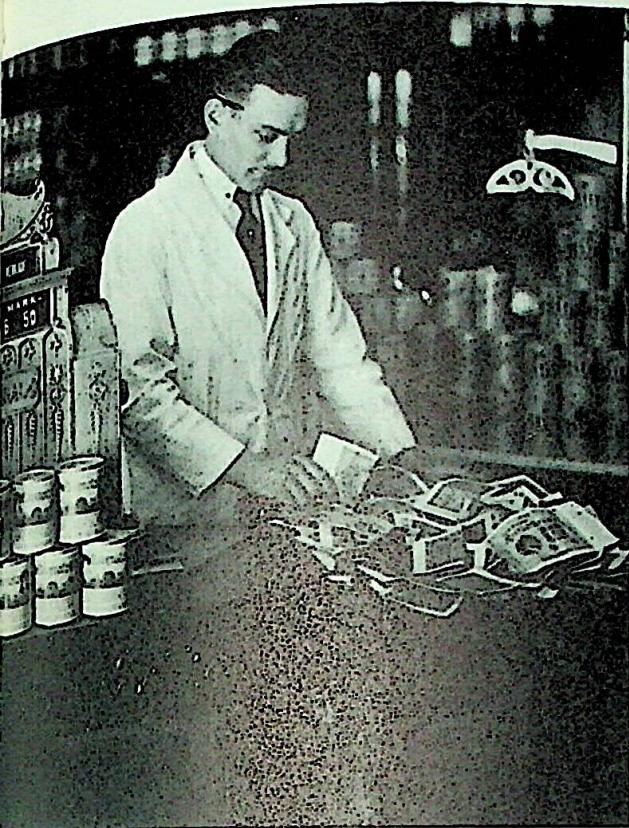
it encountered, from the moment of its birth, a passionate opposition. For thirteen years, none the less, the supporters of the Weimar Republic outnumbered its opponents. But in July and November 1932, at the last free elections held in a united Germany, the opponents of parliamentary democracy outnumbered its supporters.

During the first four years of its existence the Weimar Republic lived in a state of almost continuous economic and political crisis. The post-war inflation which affected every European state hit Germany worst of all. Reparations provided a convenient excuse for Germany's economic ills. The real cause, however, was the financial irresponsibility of her governments. In Britain during the war, income tax had reached the unheard-of rate of five shillings in the pound. In Germany, on the contrary, not a penny of the war effort was financed out of taxation. The government resorted instead to vast internal loans and the printing of paper money. It pursued the same policy after the war was over.

For the first four years of the Weimar Republic the government spent four times as

*Below: 'Long live the Red Army of three million men!' A recruiting poster during the Russian Civil War. The army grew to five million before the war was over. (Lenin Museum, Moscow.)*





*Post-war inflation in Germany. Above: a hundred billion mark German banknote. Above left: the situation at the end of 1922. Cash registers were already too small to hold the number of banknotes in circulation, and tea-chests were used instead. By the summer of 1923 workers were collecting their wages in wheelbarrows and rushing off to spend them before they lost their value. In November 1923, when the inflation was at its height, 2,000 printing houses were working twenty-four hours a day to keep up with the demand for new banknotes.*

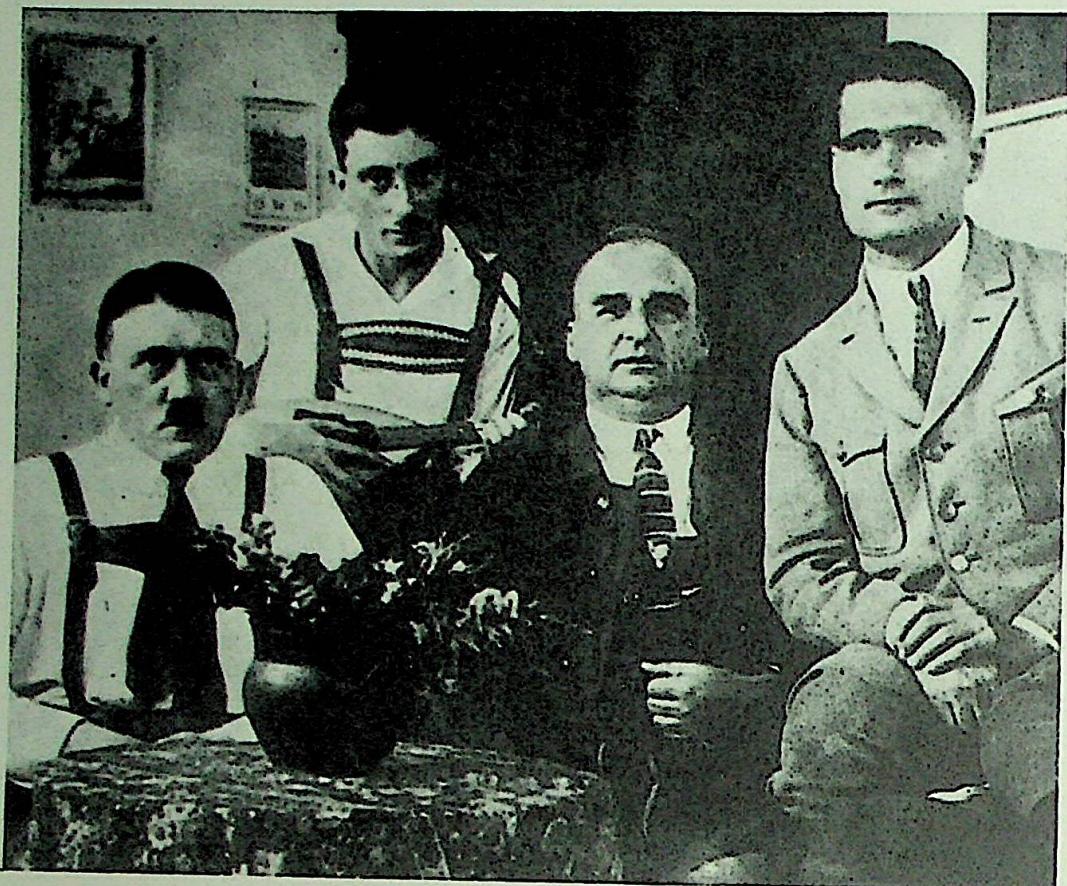
*Below left: post-war Germany: a poster in Berlin appeals for order. To many of its citizens Berlin appeared in danger of moral as well as political anarchy. Stefan Zweig wrote of the German capital during the post-war inflation: 'Berlin transformed itself into the Babel of the world... Even the Rome of Suetonius had not known orgies like the Berlin transvestite balls where hundreds of men in women's clothes and women in men's clothes danced under the benevolent eyes of the police. Amid the general collapse of values a kind of insanity took hold of precisely those middle-class circles which had hitherto been unshakable in their order. Young ladies proudly boasted that they were perverted; to be suspected of virginity at sixteen would have been considered a disgrace in every school in Berlin'. (Imperial War Museum, London.)*



much as it received in taxes. During these four years the German mark pursued a quickening decline. By 1923 it was worth less—literally—than the paper it was printed on. At its lowest point in November 1923 the mark stood at 4,200,000,000 to the dollar. The rapidity of Germany's financial recovery thereafter was further evidence of the financial irresponsibility of the past four years. That irresponsibility had put at risk not merely the future of the mark but the future of German democracy. By wiping out the savings of the German middle class it destroyed the security of the very class on which, in the long run, the security of the Weimar Republic itself depended.

Financial collapse in Weimar Germany was accompanied by the use of violence for political ends. The leading figures in this wave of violence were the *Freikorps*, groups of out-of-work officers who had earned a spurious respectability by their bloodthirsty suppression of the Bolshevik risings of 1919. In March 1920 5,000 men of the *Freikorps* led by Wolfgang Kapp, a former civil servant, occupied Berlin, declared the government deposed and the Weimar constitution null and void. The *Reichswehr* (the German army) refused to intervene. General von Seeckt refused a government request that he should do so with the curt rejoinder: 'Obviously there can be no question of letting *Reichswehr* fight against *Reichswehr*'. Instead, it was the people of Berlin themselves who paralysed the capital by a general strike, and forced Kapp and his comrades to leave Berlin.

All those who had taken part in the Kapp putsch either escaped unpunished or were given an amnesty. Seeckt, who had refused to



*Left: Hitler and friends in Landsberg prison after the failure of the Munich putsch. On the right is Hitler's future deputy, Rudolf Hess, to whom he dictated *Mein Kampf* while in prison. Though sentenced to six years imprisonment for his part in the putsch, Hitler was given an amnesty after ten months. After leaving Landsberg Hitler abandoned the Lederhosen which he is wearing in this photograph. 'It was with great reluctance', he wrote later, 'that I had finally to give up wearing leather shorts... But in such dress I couldn't have been taken seriously by any German from north of Coburg. Throughout my youth, even in winter, I never wore anything else.'*

*Below left: the Nazi leaders commemorate the Munich putsch of 9 November 1923 on its eleventh anniversary. Leading the procession on the left is Julius Streicher, self-styled 'Jew-baiter Number One'; Göring is on Hitler's right. The anniversary of the putsch was the most sacred date in the Nazi calendar. Each year after the Nazis came to power a procession followed the route taken by Hitler in 1923 to the sound of muffled drums along roads lined with flags at half mast and 'sacrificial' bowls of burning oil. (Gernsheim Collection.)*



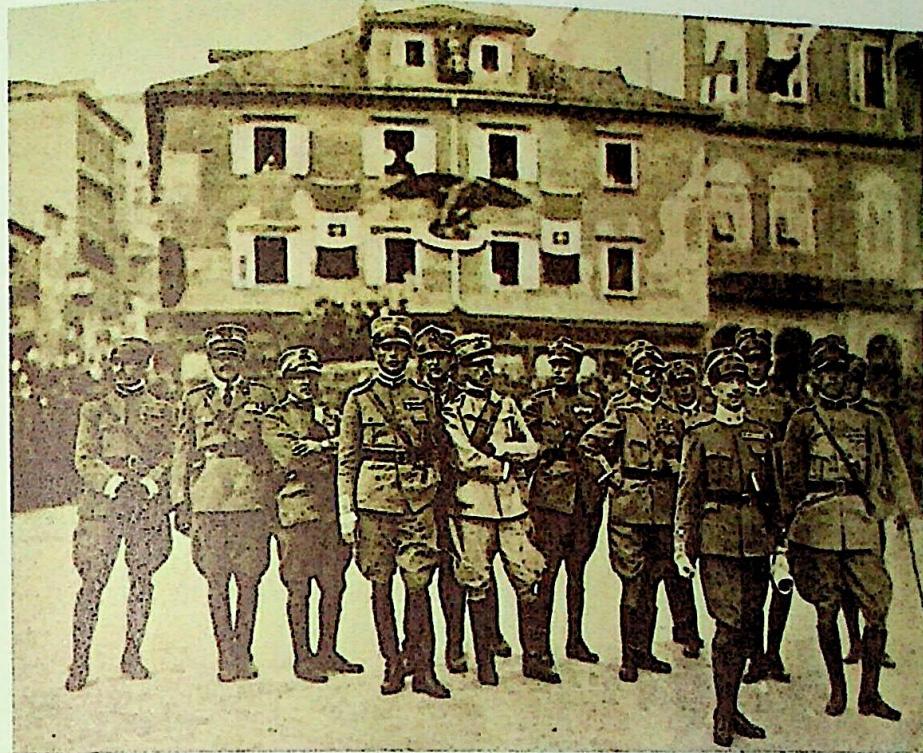
put the rising down, became head of the Reichswehr almost as soon as the rising was over. When workers in the Ruhr called for a purge of the Reichswehr, Seekt branded them as Bolsheviks and sent against them the same Freikorps which had just tried to overthrow the government.

#### The spread of violence

For three years after the Kapp putsch, the Freikorps took the lead in a well-organised campaign of political terrorism. In 1921

they arranged the assassination of the minister of finance, Mathias Erzberger, the man who had signed the armistice for Germany. 'Erzberger', said one right-wing paper, 'has suffered the fate which the vast majority of patriotic Germans desired for him.' A year later it was the turn of the foreign minister, Walter Rathenau, murdered partly because of his attitude to reparations, but chiefly because of his Jewish origins. For several months before his death nationalists in beer-halls up and down





*Gabriele D'Annunzio (below left) (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.) with his arditi (left) striking martial postures after their capture of Fiume. D'Annunzio celebrated his arrival with a characteristic example of florid rhetoric: 'I appeal to the France of Victor Hugo, to the England of Milton, to the America of Lincoln and Walt Whitman, and I interpret the will of all the holy people of Italy in proclaiming the annexation of Fiume.'*  
*Below: Mussolini began his political career as a left-wing revolutionary, becoming editor in 1912 of the leading socialist newspaper, Avanti! The beginning of the First World War turned him instead into an ardent nationalist. With funds secretly supplied by the French embassy he founded a new newspaper, Il Popolo d'Italia, to campaign for Italian entry into the war on the side of the Allies. In 1919 he founded the Italian fascist party.*



Germany had sung a song which ended with the lines. 'Shoot down Walter Rathenau, The God-damned swine of a Jewish sow'. The most disturbing aspect of these murders was their great popularity with large sections of the German people. Even the courts habitually assumed that right-wing violence (as opposed to left-wing violence) proceeded from praiseworthy motives, and were lenient in their treatment of it.

The violence of the postwar years, like the spiral of inflation, reached its peak in 1923. The year began with the French occupation of the Ruhr, an action intended to enforce the payment of reparations which were overdue. For more than eight months, until the German government called a halt, the population of the Ruhr organised a massive campaign of passive, and occasionally violent, resistance. By the end of the summer the Kremlin concluded that Germany was ripe for revolution. On orders from Moscow there were communist risings, during October, in Hamburg, Saxony, and Thuringia. All were quickly suppressed by the Reichswehr.

Violence from the left was followed, as usual, by violence from the right. In November there was a nationalist putsch in Bavaria, in imitation of the earlier Kapp putsch in Berlin. As the nationalists marched into the centre of Munich the police opened fire and the putsch collapsed. At the head of the rising were Germany's two most prominent twentieth-century dictators: one, General Ludendorff, nearing the end of his career, the other, Adolf Hitler, at the beginning of his. Ludendorff bore himself splendidly in defeat. Ignoring the gunfire and the confusion around him, he continued to march forward, the police lines opening respectfully to allow him to pass through. Adolf

Hitler emerged less creditably from his first bid for power. At the first shot he threw himself to the ground, then sprang up and fled for cover, leaving his followers to fend for themselves. Though many formidable problems still confronted the Weimar Republic at the end of 1923, Adolf Hitler did not seem to be one of them.

## Fascism in Italy

Italy, as Bismarck had long ago observed, was gifted with a voracious territorial appetite but inadequate teeth. Its gains at Versailles—the South Tyrol, Trieste, islands in the Aegean and Adriatic—were an exaggerated reward for its minor contribution to the Allied victory. But Italy had wanted more—more, in particular, of the Dalmatian coast.

In September 1919 the nationalist poet, Gabriel D'Annunzio, marched into the Dalmatian port of Fiume at the head of a thousand of his followers. To the embarrassment of the Italian government, which shared his ambitions but disavowed his methods, D'Annunzio announced the an-

nexation of Fiume to Italy. For the next year, until the Italian government plucked up courage to dislodge him, he ruled a comic opera régime, which developed many of the theatrical absurdities later borrowed, without acknowledgement, by Mussolini. His followers wore black shirts embroidered with the skull and crossbones, greeted one another with arms outstretched in the Roman salute, and communed with their leader at open-air rallies through a rhythmic and platitudinous series of questions and answers.

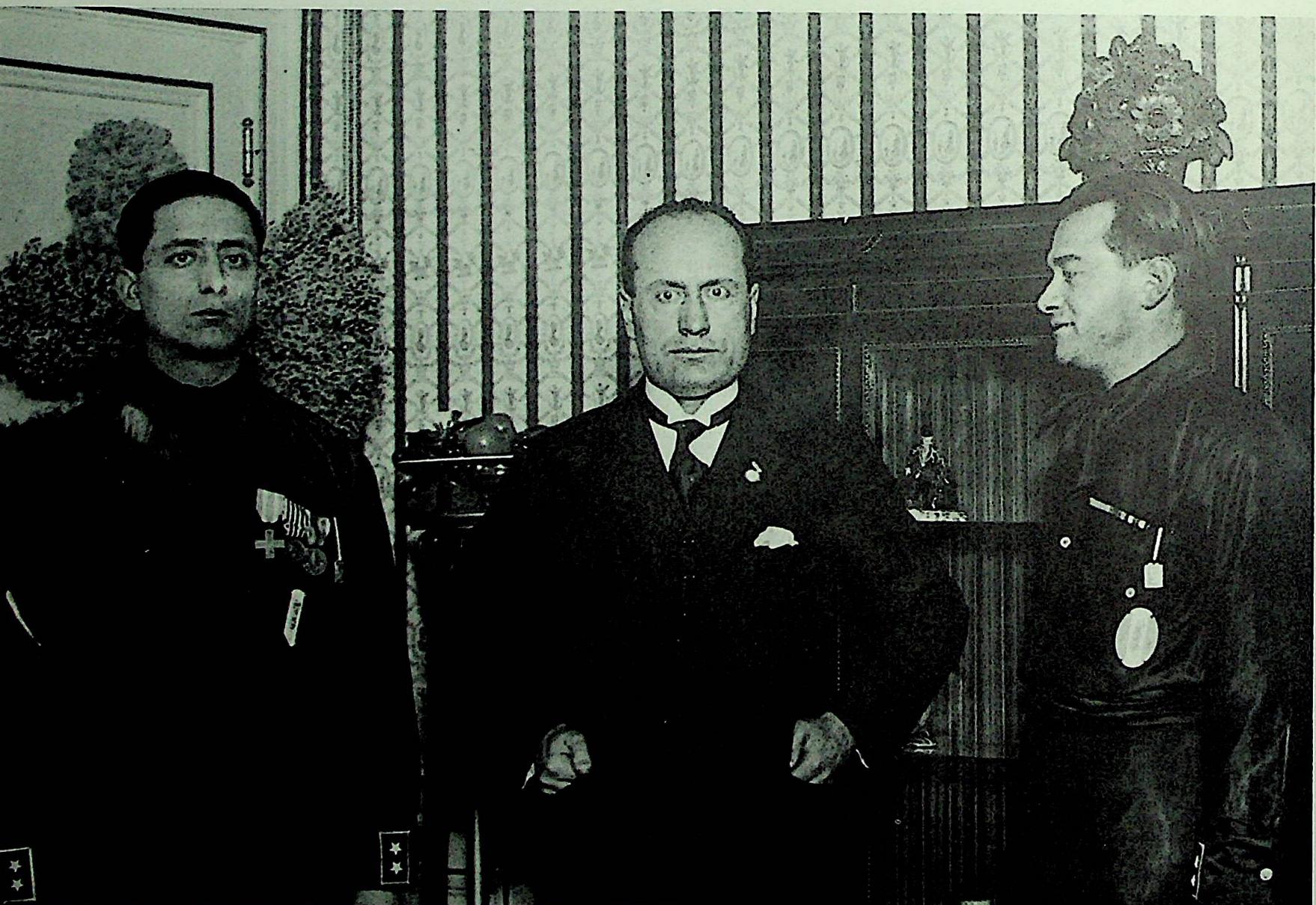
But the mood of nationalist hysteria reflected in D'Annunzio's adventure was not, as is often supposed, the mood of the Italian people as a whole. The general election of November 1919 (unlike the post-war elections in France and Britain) was remarkable for the poor showing, not merely of the nationalists and conservatives but of all those groups which had favoured intervention in the war. The newly-founded fascist party, the most extreme of the nationalist groups, failed to win a single seat. Its leader, Benito Mussolini, standing in Milan, gained only 2 per cent of the vote.

The fascists were to come to power not by exploiting the nationalism of the Italian people, but by playing on their fear of Bolshevism.

## 'Revolutionary Italy is born!'

Until 1921 Italian socialists and communists were members of a single socialist party, united in its admiration for the Russian revolution. At the 1919 election the socialist party gained a third of the vote, and trebled its pre-war representation in parliament. The socialist newspaper, *Avanti!*, declared in triumph, 'Revolutionary Italy is born!' The wave of social unrest which swept through Italy during 1919 and 1920 seemed to prove its point. Many thousands of peasants settled on large estates and seized holdings for themselves. The government seemed powerless to prevent them. Industrial unrest, too, was worse in Italy than anywhere else in Europe. It reached its peak in August 1920 when half a million workers occupied their factories and raised the red flag over them.

Ever since the end of the war the socialist party had been openly demanding 'the



violent overthrow of bourgeois society'. In August 1920 its bluff was called. A Lenin would have used the occupation of the factories as the springboard for revolution. The Italian socialists, however, had not the slightest idea of how to put their revolutionary theories into practice. In September the factories were handed back to their owners, in return for a rise in wages and improved conditions.

The end result of all the talk of revolution in post-war Italy was not revolution itself but the rise of fascism. As the anarchist, Enrico Malatesta, prophetically remarked during the occupation of the factories: 'If we do not go on to the end we shall have to pay with blood and tears for the fear we are now causing the bourgeoisie.' With the return of the factories to their owners, all real danger of revolution had passed. 'Italian Bolshevism', wrote Mussolini privately, 'is mortally wounded.' The Italian middle classes, however, were more convinced than ever that Bolshevism was preparing for its final assault. It was by exploiting this fear, and by posing as the saviours of Italy from red revolution, that the fascists were able to

raise themselves from obscurity to a position which enabled them to make a bid for power.

In July 1920, on the eve of the occupation of the factories, there were, at most, a hundred fascist groups (*fasci*) in the whole of Italy. Six months later, there were over a thousand. By now the fascists had the financial backing of many large industrialists and landowners who feared for their factories and estates. They had the support, too, of the same group of out-of-work army officers, who made up the Freikorps in Germany. And, like the Freikorps, the paramilitary fascist *squadre d'azione* had the blessing of the government. Soon after the occupation of the factories, the ministry of war agreed to pay all ex-officers who led the *squadre* four-fifths of their former pay. In many parts of Italy, Mussolini and his followers were able to rely on the support of prefects, police and army commanders, anxious to pay off old scores against the socialists.

Confident of the collusion of the state authorities, the fascists began an intensive series of terrorist raids on left-wing organisations. They became quite open in boasting

about their brutality. During one raid near Siena, for example, a fascist leader ordered one of his victims to balance a cup on his head so that he could demonstrate his marksmanship. He missed and the man was killed. The incident was reported in the local newspaper under the humorous headline, 'An unfortunate William Tell'.

The Italian middle classes found it impossible to conceive of a threat to the social order other than from the left. Impressed by years of socialist propaganda calling for the violent overthrow of bourgeois society, many were inclined to accept as legitimate the fascist argument that violence could be met only by violence. Even among liberals who deplored the fascists' methods, the illusion persisted that these excesses were no more than a passing phase. One of those who shared this illusion was the liberal minister Giolitti, who compared the fascists with the British irregulars in Ireland. 'The fascists', he told a British diplomat, 'are our Black and Tans.'

At the election of May 1921 Giolitti included the fascists on his own electoral list, thus helping them to gain a foothold in parliament for the first time. As yet few heeded Mussolini's warning that the fascists were destroying Bolshevism, not as an end in itself, but 'in preparation for the settling of accounts with the liberal state which survives'. When the liberal state finally recognised the nature of the fascist threat to its existence, it proved unequal to the challenge.

### The March on Rome

There were two crucial turning points in the fascists' bid for power. The first was the government's failure to suppress the paramilitary *squadre d'azione* on which fascist power was based. Without the *squadre* the March on Rome would have been impossible. A government decree issued in December 1921 ordered the prefects throughout Italy to suppress all unofficial armed organisations. Mussolini immediately declared that all fascists were members of the *squadre*, confident that no government would dare dissolve the whole fascist party. His confidence proved to be well-founded, and the decree remained a dead letter. 'The government', boasted Mussolini, 'can do nothing against us.' Its nerve had failed.

The fascist leader in Ferrara wrote in his diary on the first day of 1922: 'We have not only broken the resistance of our enemies but we also control the organs of the state. The prefect has to submit to orders given by me in the name of the fascists.' During the next nine months the fascists made themselves the masters of northern Italy, forcibly taking over most of its town councils. By October they were ready to make their bid for power. Mussolini told his followers on 24 October: 'Either the government will be given to us or we shall descend on Rome and take it.' Three days later the March on Rome began.

*Left: Mussolini, flanked by body-guards, practises his hypnotic stare. 'The eyes of the Duce are on every one of you. No-one can say what is the meaning of that look on his face. It is an eagle spreading its wings and rising into space. It is a flame that searches out your heart to light there a vermillion fire. Who can resist that burning eye, darting out its arrows? But do not be afraid: for you those arrows will change into rays of glory'.*

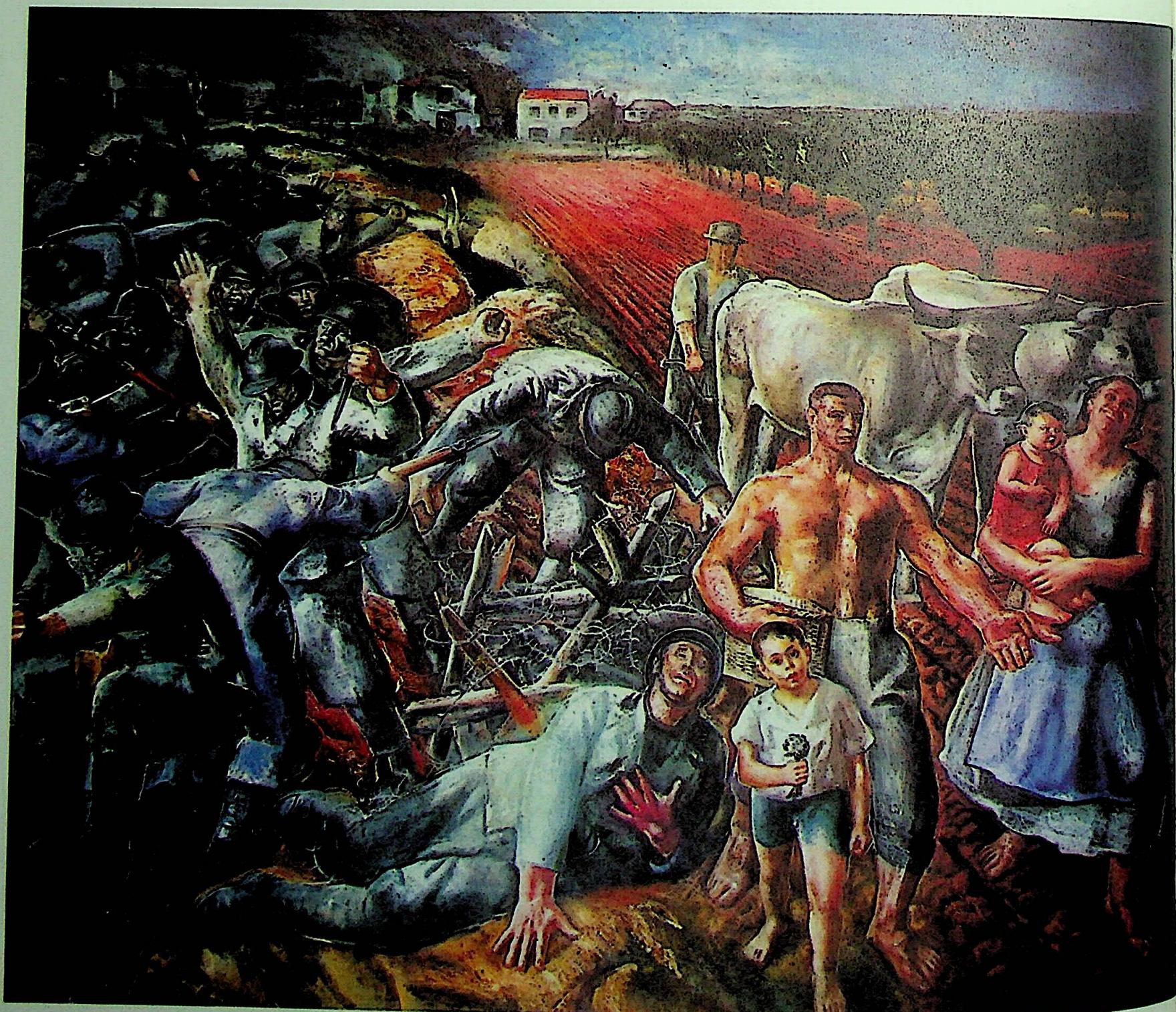
*Below: Mussolini reviews his troops after the March on Rome. Photographs of Mussolini smiling were usually forbidden on the grounds that these might detract from the high seriousness of his purpose. So was any mention of the fact that he was a grandfather for fear that this might damage his reputation for youthful vigour.*





Left: fascist youth parade in front of the Palazzo Venezia, Mussolini's official residence. They were issued with toy rifles at eleven years of age followed by real rifles at fifteen.

Below: 'The three sowings' by Carpanetti: a painting which reflects the fascist beliefs in war—along with work and the family—as part of the natural order of things. 'Fascism', said Mussolini, 'does not, generally speaking, believe in the possibility or utility of perpetual peace . . . War alone keys up all human energies to their maximum tension and sets the seal of nobility on those peoples who have the courage to face it'.



At the eleventh hour the Italian government seemed suddenly to recover its nerve. On the evening of 29 October the cabinet formally requested the king, Victor Emmanuel, to declare a state of martial law and use the army to put down the fascist march. Had the king granted this request, as constitutionally he was bound to do, the March on Rome would have ended in a fiasco from which the fascist movement would have had difficulty in recovering. Instead, Victor Emmanuel invited Mussolini to become prime minister. Hitherto, Mussolini had taken no part in the March on Rome, preferring to remain out of harm's way in Milan. On receiving the king's invitation, however, he donned a bowler hat, boarded a sleeping car and arrived in Rome ahead of his followers. When the fascists entered Rome on 30 October, Mussolini was already prime minister.

Mussolini established his dictatorship only by degrees. For eighteen months he remained head of a coalition government. For more than two years opposition parties and an opposition press continued to exist. As late as the summer of 1924, after the murder by fascists of a socialist deputy, the opposition almost succeeded in bringing Mussolini down. In January 1925, as a result of this experience, Mussolini declared Italy a one-party state.

At the time of the March on Rome no one, not even Mussolini, had had much idea what fascist government would be like. Like the rest of Italy, Mussolini discovered as he went along. He declared:

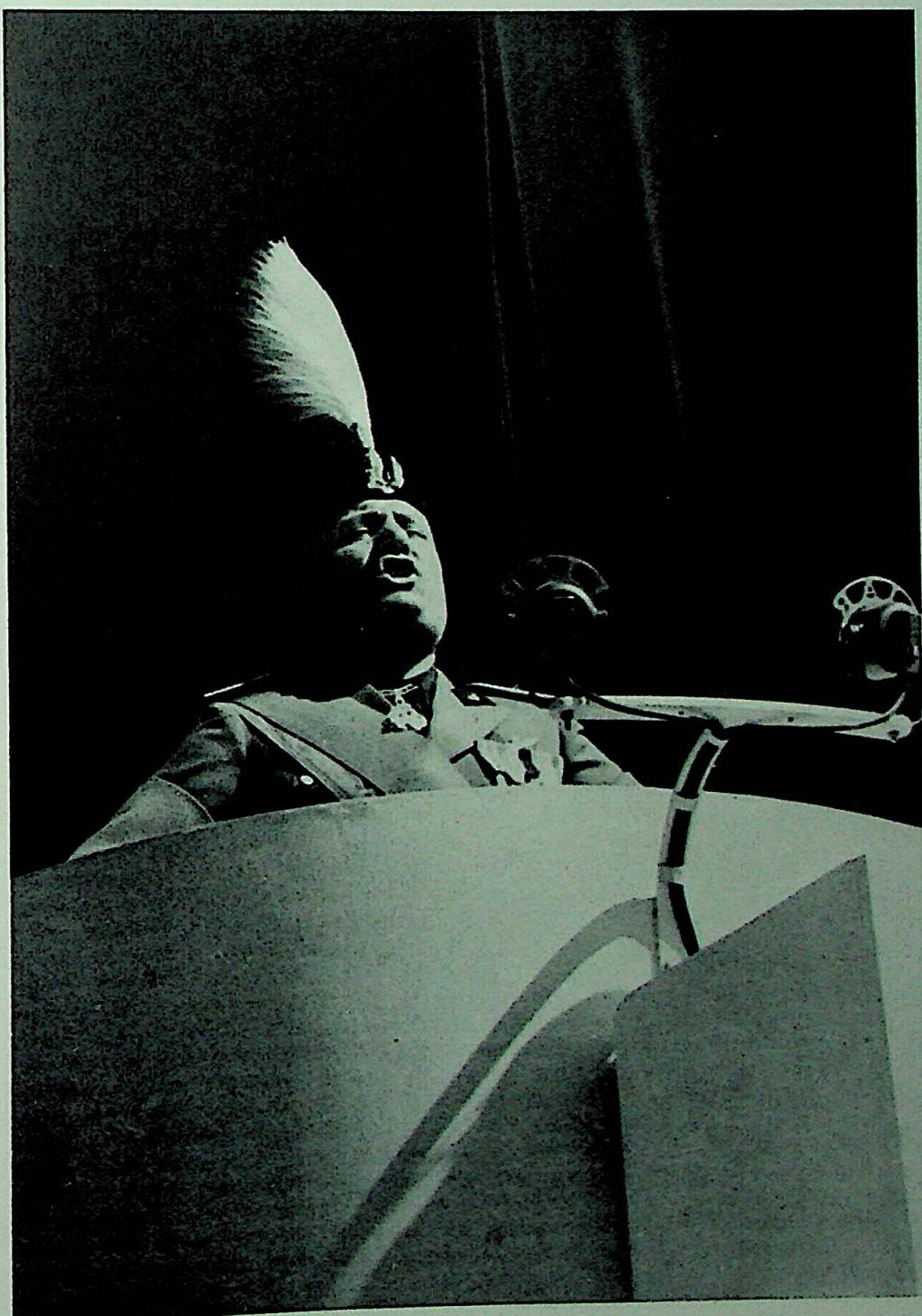
'We do not believe in dogmatic programmes. . . . We permit ourselves the luxury of being aristocratic and democratic, conservative and progressive, reactionary and revolutionary, legalists and illegalists, according to the circumstances of the moment, the place and the environment.'

Though he was vague about his policies Mussolini was clear about the poses which he wanted to adopt. He was, he informed the readers of his *Autobiography*, the man who had preserved Italy from the threat of Bolshevism, cleansed it from the corruption of parliamentary government, and given it a new sense of national pride. Many foreign statesmen were taken in. Winston Churchill called Mussolini 'the saviour of his country'; Sir Austen Chamberlain, the British foreign secretary, felt 'confident that he is a patriot and a sincere man'. Ramsay MacDonald, Britain's first labour prime minister, wrote him friendly letters even while Mussolini was busy destroying the Italian socialist party. Mussolini made much of his friendship with British statesmen and their wives. In 1925 he ordered one and a half million copies of a postcard showing himself in conversation with Lady Chamberlain, and had them distributed all over Italy.

Whatever their attitude to Mussolini

himself, almost all European observers during the nineteen-twenties utterly mistook the significance of the fascist movement. They regarded fascism, not as the beginning of a European movement, but as a peculiarly Italian response to a peculiarly Italian situation. Mussolini himself endorsed their judgement. 'Fascism', he declared as late as 1928, 'is not an article for export'. Only the Nazis seemed to understand the European significance of the fascist revolution. 'The March on Rome', wrote Goebbels later, 'was a warning, a storm-signal for liberal democracy. It was the first attempt to destroy the world of the liberal, democratic spirit. . . .'

*Below: Mussolini communing with the masses. 'The crowd', he wrote, 'is like a woman. It loves a strong man'.*





## Europe and the outside world

*The United States and Russia retreat from world affairs; Europe, though its supremacy is undermined, still dominates the globe; in India Gandhi's struggle against the raj foreshadows the decline of the British Empire; the Jews establish a 'national home' in Palestine.*

'In the middle of the twentieth century there will be only two great powers in the world, the United States and Russia, and they will overshadow the rest.' (Richard Cobden, Victorian liberal statesman, 1837)

### The decline of Europe

To acute political observers it had long been obvious that Europe's supremacy in world

affairs would one day be replaced by global rivalry between the United States and Russia. These two nations, wrote de Tocqueville in 1835, were each of them 'marked out by the will of heaven to sway the destinies of half the globe'. The First World War seemed to have brought the prophecies of both Cobden and de Tocqueville to fulfilment. The United States, now beyond dispute the greatest economic power on

*Above: 'The lion's cubs rally to the dam'. 22 per cent adult British males, 19.35 per cent of New Zealanders, 13.48 per cent of Canadians, 13.43 per cent of Australians, and 11.12 per cent of South Africans served abroad during the First World War. Most were volunteers. Conscription was introduced in New Zealand soon after Great Britain in 1916, but not until 1917 in Canada, and not at all in Australia and South Africa.*

# 300,000 CANADIANS

HAVE JOINED THE COLORS

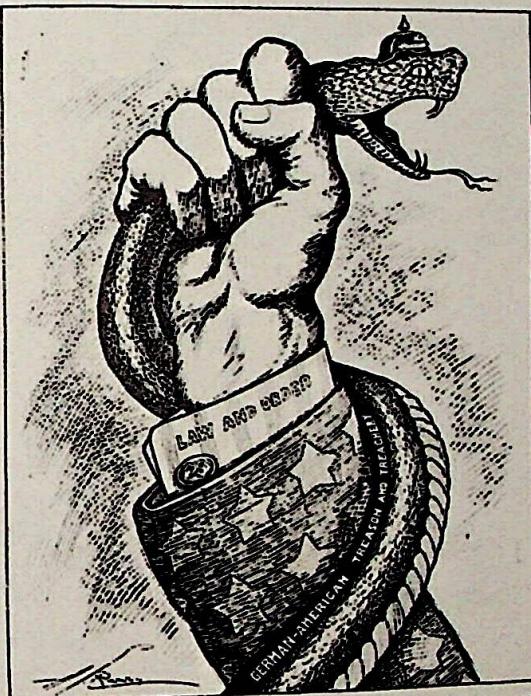
AND ARE HELPING TO CRUSH THIS VENOMOUS REPTILE.

Two hundred thousand will yet answer the call that says:

## Your King and Country Need You Will YOU Be One of These?

The Forces of  
the ALLIES  
are Exerting  
Every Ounce of  
Their Strength  
to CHAIN this  
DRAGON.

Will YOU  
HELP Along  
With the Other  
LOYAL SONS  
of Britain?



"They have poured the poison of disloyalty into the very arteries of our mortal life; have sought to bring the authority and good name of our Government into contempt, to destroy our industries wherever they thought it service for their vindictive purposes to strike at them, and to subvert our policies in the cause of foreign interests, such creatures of poison, disloyalty and anarchy must be crushed out."

[By Courtesy Standard Star.]

JOIN the  
99th ESSEX  
BATTALION  
and HELP  
CRUSH the  
GERMAN  
MONSTER  
The World-wide  
Menace to  
Humanity and  
Civilization.

For particulars  
Apply to  
Lieut. Morton  
Wellington Barracks  
or W. T. Gregory  
at 141 Talbot St.

Left: A Canadian recruiting poster. Opposition from many French Canadians to the introduction of conscription in 1917 caused great bitterness in much of English-speaking Canada. In December 1917 the Toronto Daily News published a map of Canada with Quebec marked in black under the heading, 'The Foul Blot on Canada'. (Imperial War Museum, London.)

of the world's population.'

The torch of revolution had begun to pass from the peoples of industrial Europe, for whom it had been intended, to the backward peasant masses of Asia. But even in Asia there seemed no immediate prospect of a successful revolution. The communist risings in Chinese cities during the later nineteen-twenties were no more successful than the risings in German cities during the early nineteen-twenties. Revolution in Asia, like revolution in Europe, could come about only as a result of war.

Though the primacy of Europe continued after the First World War, its basis had been seriously undermined by the European powers themselves. The principle of self-determination proclaimed by the Allies in Europe was one which colonial peoples were bound to apply to the European empires: and which, a generation later, was to provide the ideological basis for decolonisation. In both Asia and the Middle East (though not in Africa) it was the First World War which established nationalism as a serious political force.

In the Middle East the Allies deliberately encouraged the growth of Arab nationalism against the Turkish Empire, only to find the same nationalism turning against themselves as soon as the war was over. In the two largest Asian colonies, India and Indonesia, the war witnessed the emergence of the National Congress and Sarekat Islam—hitherto middle class in membership and moderate in their demands—as mass movements demanding for the first time complete national independence.

### The British Commonwealth of Nations

The First World War also transformed the relationship of the British dominions with the mother country. Responsibility for the foreign policy of the Empire, Asquith had said in 1911, could never be shared with the dominions. In 1914 the dominions, like the rest of the Empire, found themselves at war by a decision not of their own making but of the British government. Though the dominions accepted this decision without question, their governments came to resent Asquith's failure either to consult them about the conduct of the war or even to keep them adequately informed about British policy. The very scale of the dominions' contribution to the war—458,000

earth, emerged from the war apparently intent on claiming what Wilson called 'the moral leadership of all mankind'. Russia shared the same ambition. The November revolution had made it the centre of a new world faith which, within a single generation, was to rule the destiny of a third of mankind, and of whose powers of attraction the statesmen gathered at Versailles seemed to have no doubt.

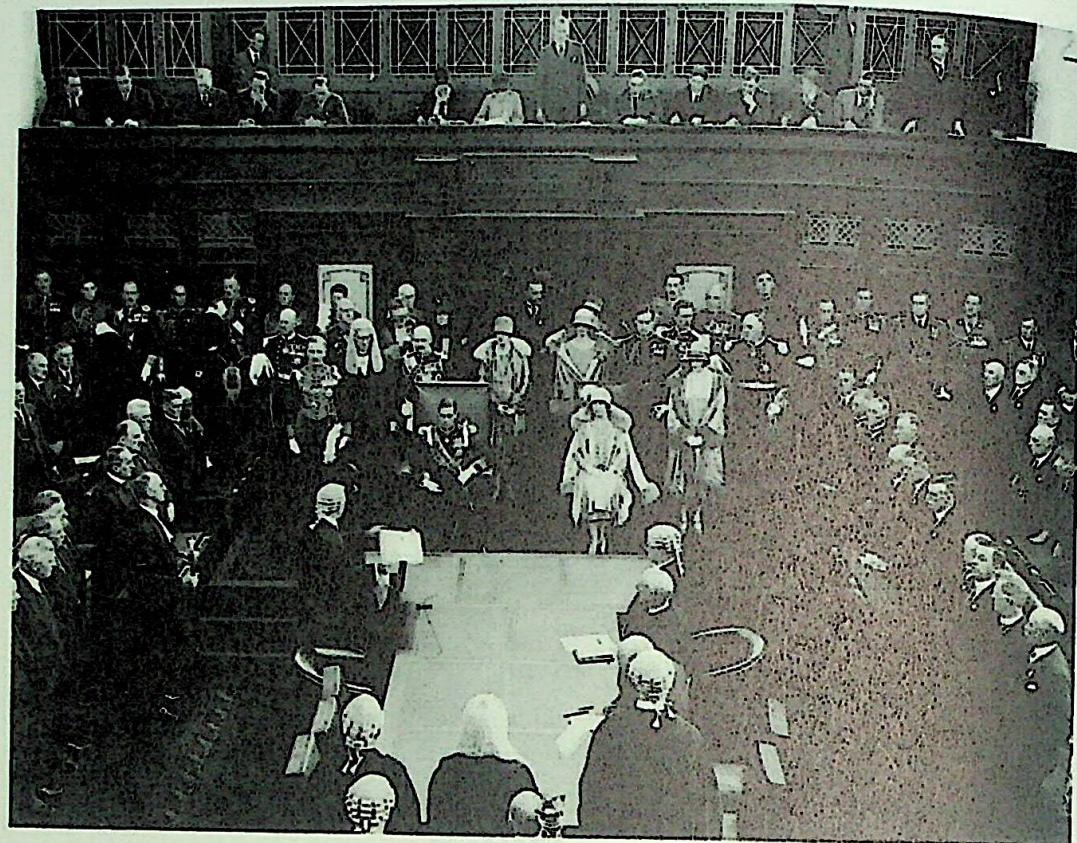
The age of European supremacy was not to end, however, with the First World War. It was reprieved for twenty years by the simultaneous retreat of the United States and Russia from world affairs. In his inaugural address, in January 1921, President Harding formally renounced the vision of the future which Wilson had laid before the American people. 'We seek no part', he said, 'in directing the destinies of the world.' Most Americans, during the nineteen-twen-

ties, came to the conclusion that the United States ought never to have entered 'Wilson's war' at all. As late as 1937, even after the rise of Hitler's Germany, an opinion poll showed that 70 per cent of Americans were still of this opinion.

While the United States was unwilling to 'direct the destinies of the world', the Soviet Union (as Russia renamed itself in 1922) was anxious, but unable, to do so. By the time of Lenin's death, in January 1924, the prospect of European revolution, which had earlier seemed so real both to the Bolsheviks themselves and to the peacemakers in Paris, had become remote. In his last article before his death, Lenin consoled himself for the Bolsheviks' disappointments in Europe with the optimistic reflection that 'the East has already entered the revolutionary movement' and that 'Russia, India, China, etc., constitute a huge majority



*Above: an Australian soldier at Gallipoli appeals for more recruits. The anniversary of the landing at Gallipoli on 25 April 1915 is still celebrated in Australia as a national holiday, Anzac Day. In the words of the Australian historian, Professor J. D. B. Miller: 'The Gallipoli campaign, in which British troops outnumbered Australians and New Zealanders, is remembered in Australia as a heavily Australian affair, the British role being confined to the responsibility for putting the Australians ashore at the wrong place on the first day'. (Imperial War Museum, London.)*



*Above: the Duke of York (the future George VI) opens the new Australian Parliament House at Canberra on 9 May 1927. When the six Australian colonies became the united Commonwealth of Australia on 1 January 1901, Sydney and Melbourne began a protracted quarrel over which should be the capital. After eleven years of wrangling it was finally decided to build a new capital at Canberra, an inconvenient site with the sole advantage of being halfway between them.*

*Above right: O'Connell Street in Dublin during the Easter Rising in 1916, its rooftops silhouetted by fires from indiscriminate shelling by British artillery. On the right is the Ionic portico of the General Post Office, the chief stronghold of the nationalist rebels. Six years later, during the civil war which followed independence, O'Connell Street was to be the scene of one of the last stands of De Valera's republican irregulars.*

men from Canada, 332,000 from Australia, 112,000 from New Zealand, 76,000 from South Africa—made it inevitable that their voice should eventually be heard.

One of Lloyd George's earliest acts as prime minister was to announce the formation of an Imperial War Cabinet composed of the prime ministers and other representatives of Britain and the dominions. The new cabinet met in London for several weeks during both 1917 and 1918 to co-ordinate the imperial war effort and prepare for peace negotiations.

#### 'Autonomous communities within the British Empire'

At the Imperial Conference of 1926 the dominions were formally conceded in theory the status which had been theirs in fact since 1917, couched in words which have passed into British constitutional history:

'They are autonomous communities within the British Empire, equal in status, in no way subordinate one to another in any aspect of their domestic or external affairs, though united by a common allegiance to the Crown, and freely associated as members of the British Commonwealth of Nations.'

There was a calculated ambiguity in the definition. Australian loyalists could pride themselves on remaining part of the British Empire; Afrikaner nationalists gained the satisfaction of being recognised as members of an autonomous community.

To many the whole idea of the Commonwealth of Nations was a piece of constitutional metaphysics which defied rational analysis. This was particularly true of the position of King George V, who, having begun his reign as ruler of a united empire, now found himself, rather to his annoyance,

the owner of seven technically separate crowns: one for Britain and the colonies and one each for the six dominions (Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Canada, Newfoundland, and from 1922, Ireland). He was not amused by comments such as that of the sceptical Canadian historian, Professor Lower, who remarked: 'God in three persons is outnumbered by the British King in seven persons.'

For its supporters the Commonwealth had from the first a sentimental as much as a constitutional significance. Many probably shared the feelings of the future Australian prime minister, Sir Robert Menzies, who wrote later that the Commonwealth meant to him:

'King George and Queen Mary coming to their Jubilee in Westminster Hall . . . at Canberra, at Wellington, at Ottawa, at Pre-



toria, the men of Parliament meeting as those who met at Westminster seven hundred years ago . . . Hammond at Sydney and Bradman at Lords and McCabe at Trent Bridge, with the ghosts of Grace and Trumble looking on. . . .

The First World War was followed by a steady drift of the dominions away from dependence on Britain. Between the wars most Canadian politicians accepted the dictum of Henri Bourassa, the leader of the French Canadians, that 'There is not a single problem of either internal or external policy which we can settle without reference to the policy of the United States.' Sir Robert Borden, the Canadian prime minister, warned Lloyd George at the Paris peace conference that 'If the future policy of the British Empire meant working in co-operation with some European nation as against the United States, that policy could not reckon on the approval or support of Canada.' In 1921 Borden's successor, Arthur Meighen, supported by South Africa, put pressure on Britain to abandon her alliance with Japan because of America's opposition to it.

Australasia followed, more slowly, the same path of growing dependence on the United States. For most of the interwar years Australia and New Zealand were overwhelmingly concerned with domestic problems almost to the exclusion of foreign policy. Though their inhabitants were, by 1939, more prosperous than any other people in the world, neither as yet even possessed a diplomatic service in non-Commonwealth countries. As early as March 1914, however, Winston Churchill, as first lord of

the Admiralty, had warned Australasia that it could not depend on British naval support in the Pacific if Britain were involved in war in Europe. And without the Royal Navy to defend them, 'the only course of the five millions of white men in the Pacific would be to seek the protection of the United States.'

The rise of Japan during the nineteen-thirties and the realisation that the Far East had now become, in the words of one New Zealand newspaper, 'Australasia's Near North', slowly convinced the governments of Australasia of the truth of Churchill's warning. At the beginning of 1942, even before the surrender of Singapore, the Australian prime minister, John Curtin, declared:

'Without any inhibitions of any kind, I make it quite clear that Australia looks to America, free of any pangs as to our traditional links of kinship with the United Kingdom.' Though the bluntness of Curtin's statement angered even Churchill (despite his earlier warning), it has remained ever since the underlying premise of Australia's defence policy.

#### The Irish Free State

The most restless of the dominions between the wars was also the newest and the nearest home. Until the First World War Ireland had been represented at Westminster by her own members of parliament, most of whom had demanded 'Home Rule', a formula which combined internal self-government with continued British sovereignty. The First World War made Irish nationalism, like the nationalism of other subject peoples, more extreme. At Easter

1916 a group of extremists seized the centre of Dublin and proclaimed an Irish republic 'in the name of God and of the dead generations'. After four days of street fighting the new republic surrendered and all but one of its leaders were executed. The single exception was the future president of Ireland, Eamon de Valéa, born in the United States of a Spanish father and Irish mother, whose American nationality earned him a reprieve.

In the short term the Easter Rising achieved only the destruction of much of central Dublin. In the longer term, it meant the abandonment of Home Rule. The 450 Irish lives lost during the rising, and the sixteen executions which followed it ('few but corroding', as Churchill described them), shocked most Irishmen outside Ulster into supporting the nationalist demand for complete independence.

By the end of the war most Irish M.P.s had already left Westminster. After the 1918 elections they established both an independent Irish parliament, the *Dáil Eireann*, and an independent Irish government under Eamon de Valéa. The new government hoped at first, by levying its own taxes and administering its own justice, simply to take over peacefully from the discredited British administration. Over much of Ireland it might well have done so. The Irish Republican Army, however, thought otherwise. Against the wishes of the *Dáil*, it began its own guerrilla war against the British.

In 1920 the British brought in their own Freikorps, the so-called 'Black and Tans' and 'Auxis', whose atrocities rivalled, and perhaps exceeded, those of the I.R.A. 'Things are being done in Ireland', said Asquith in the House of Commons, 'which would disgrace the blackest annals of the lowest despotism in Europe.' In the summer of 1921 Lloyd George abandoned hope of subduing Ireland by force, and the rebels agreed to a truce. In January 1922 the *Dáil* approved a treaty establishing the Irish Free State with dominion status, and allowing Ulster to remain part of the United Kingdom.

In England the treaty helped to bring about the break-up of Lloyd George's coalition and the return to traditional party politics. In Ireland the bitterest phase of 'the troubles' now began. A republican minority, led by de Valéa, denounced the treaty as a surrender and began a civil war against their former colleagues. Some British ministers found it difficult to suppress a feeling of gratification at the sight of Irish nationalists tearing one another to pieces. Birkenhead, the lord chancellor, told the Lords in the summer of 1922: 'I, for one, rejoice, as I have said before in this House, that this task [the suppression of the rebellion], painful, costly, bloody as it must ultimately prove, is being undertaken by those to whom it properly falls.'



*Above: French officials arriving in a Togoland village after its transfer from Germany to France. Germany was deprived of its overseas empire after the First World War on the grounds of 'colonial unworthiness'. When the Third Reich later began to clamour for the return of German colonies, the French authorities shrewdly circulated extracts from Mein Kampf among their African subjects in order to convince them of the disadvantages of a return to German rule. (British Museum, London.)*

*Above right: Marshal Lyautey, governor-general of Morocco 1912-25, France's*

*greatest African proconsul. 'There are people', said Lyautey, 'who regard colonial enterprise as barbaric. What stupidity! Wherever I have gone, it has been to construct; and whatever I had to destroy I built up again later, more solidly and durably. Our troops left behind them territory restored to peace, criss-crossed with roads, and quickening with life'.*

*The raj at the height of its power.*

*Below: a British officer in India about 1870. 'Britain', declared the viceroy, Lord Minto, was engaged in India in 'the magnificent work of governing an inferior race'.*

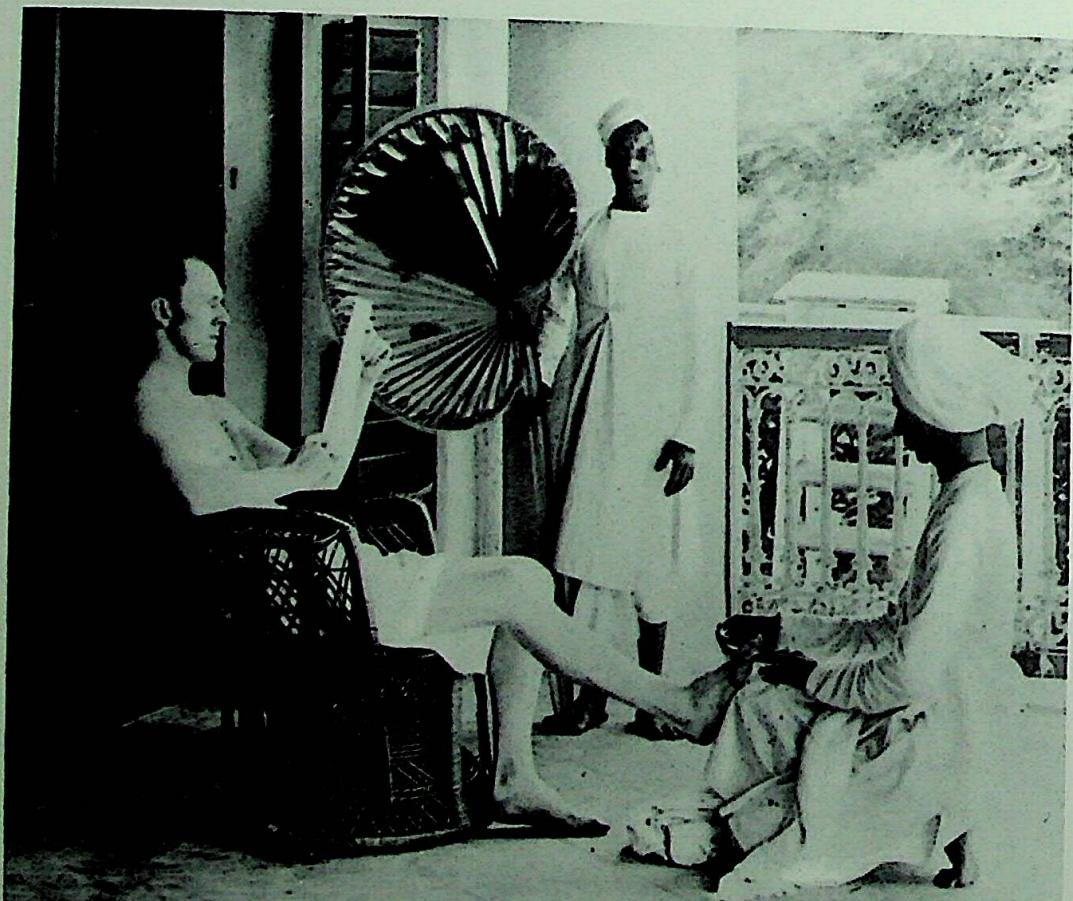


The atrocities committed by Irish against Irish after independence exceeded even those of the 'Black and Tans'. Government forces took to disposing of groups of their opponents by tying them to mines, which were then exploded. Before the civil war ended in the spring of 1923, the Free State government had executed more than three times as many Irishmen as the British had done in the two years before independence. After independence de Valéra remained for a decade in the political wilderness. But in 1932 he returned to power at the head of a new party, the *Fianna Fáil* ('Soldiers of Destiny'), and began gradually to dismantle Ireland's last links with Britain.

'Wider still and wider . . .'

Few Europeans after the First World War realised that the decline of Europe had begun. The fact that Europe now controlled more of the outside world than ever before seemed more impressive than the faint stirrings of opposition to its rule. The British Empire had gained a million square miles at the expense of Turkey and Germany. It now contained a quarter of the earth's surface and a quarter of mankind. Few British people had any suspicion that the power of their empire was being weakened by the growth of a Commonwealth within it. The South African prime minister, Jan Smuts, the most persuasive advocate of the Commonwealth of Nations, emphatically denied that this was so. The British Empire, he told the Imperial Conference of 1921, 'emerged from the war quite the greatest power in the world, and it is only unwise or unsound policy that could rob her of that great position.'

Patriotic pride in the British Empire was still a recent phenomenon. The idea that Britain possessed some kind of mission to the 'lesser breeds without the law' had captured a hold on the popular imagination only in the last decade of the nineteenth century. By 1918, however, most British people already regarded this mission as one of their oldest traditions. Their mood was



reflected in the tune and words of 'Land of Hope and Glory', by now so popular that it had come to be regarded as a second national anthem. There were few who doubted the immense moral superiority of the British Empire over all other empires past and present. It was, said Lloyd George in 1921, 'the most hopeful experiment in human organisation which the world has yet seen.' Hardly anyone was eccentric enough to suppose that within half a century the empire would have almost disappeared.

## European rule in Africa

European rule over most of the African continent, though profound in its effects, was comparatively brief—less, in many cases, than a single lifetime. Between the wars, however, most British people thought of Africans as rather child-like people, probably incapable of ever running their own affairs, in general cheerful and easy-going, but retaining beneath a thin layer of civilisation an aura of primeval savagery.

This, at least, was the image of the peoples of Africa which most schoolchildren in Britain learned from their geography textbooks. One of the most popular of these textbooks was *Children Far Away*, by Ernest Young, a fellow of the Royal Geographical Society, which was first published in 1919 and reprinted twelve times in the next six years. Young's book devotes two of its seven chapters to the children of Africa: one to the Negroes, the other to the Pygmies. While Negro children ('the little blackies') emerge from Young's description as mindless, but moderately benevolent,

Pygmy children are portrayed as both mindless and malevolent:

'The pygmy children do not love their father or mother, and their fathers and mothers do not love them. They care nothing for their own land or people. All they want is to hunt and to eat. They are cruel to one another.'

### 'The mandate of civilisation'

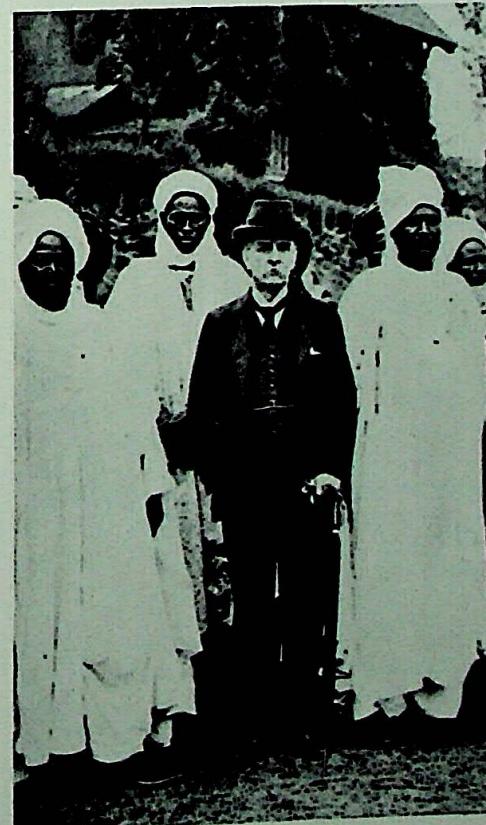
White rule in English-speaking Africa took two quite different forms. In West Africa and much of East Africa it was based on the system of 'indirect rule' made famous by the most celebrated of Britain's African proconsuls, Sir Frederick Lugard. Lugard believed in strengthening traditional government by tribal chiefs—if necessary even creating tribal governments where there had been none before—and placing the chiefs themselves under the paternal care of British district officers. By these means he succeeded in governing the whole of Nigeria, the largest state in Africa (with one-fifth of Africa's population), with a civil service of only a few hundred men.

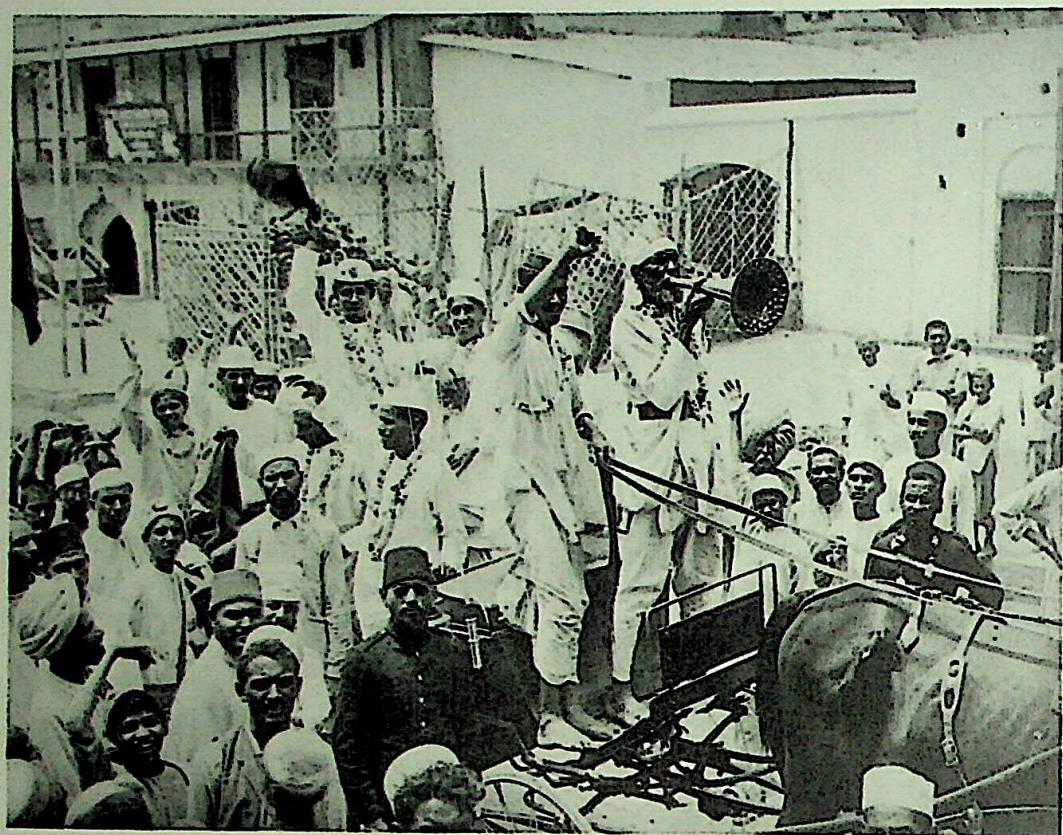
Just as Lugard's Nigeria became the showcase of British imperial administration, so his book, *The Dual Mandate in Tropical Africa*, first published in 1922, became the bible of British imperialism between the wars. In it Lugard argued that Britain possessed a duty both to the peoples of Africa and to civilisation itself: to the peoples of Africa, to watch over their political and economic advancement; and to civilised society as a whole, to make sure that Africa's natural resources were avail-

*Below left: an Indian recruiting poster during the First World War. Its message is a crude one: 'This soldier is guarding India. He is guarding his home and his household. Thus we are guarding your home. You have to join the army'. Nearly a million Indians joined up: but the raj was anxious to prevent any large-scale grant of commissions to Indians for fear of its effect on British recruitment to the Indian army after the war was over. (Imperial War Museum, London.)*

*Benevolent imperialism. Below centre: Lord Lugard leads a party of African chiefs around the London Zoo in 1925. Most British people at this time had probably never seen a man with black or brown skin. There were fewer Africans living in London at the end of the First World War than during the eighteenth century.*

*Below: Motilal Nehru addresses a women's nationalist meeting during the nineteen-twenties. Until 1919 Nehru had seemed completely anglicised both in his dress and his way of life. As one of India's most prosperous lawyers he was able to send his son Jawaharlal (the future prime minister of an independent India) to be educated at Harrow. But the Amritsar massacre turned him, as it turned many other Indians, into an ardent nationalist.*





*Above: 'Gandhi Day' in Delhi, 26 July 1922: a day of protest called by Congress after Gandhi's imprisonment on a charge of incitement to violence. Millions in India looked on Gandhi as a minor deity and called him 'Mahatma' or 'Great Soul'.*

able to it. 'The merchant, the miner and the manufacturer', he wrote, 'do not enter the tropics on sufferance or employ their technical skill, their energy, and their capital as interlopers or as "greedy capitalists", but in fulfilment of the mandate of civilisation.' The eventual goal of European rule should be to prepare the peoples of Africa to manage their own affairs. But Lugard warned against going at too fast a pace: 'The danger of going too fast with native races is more likely to lead to disappointment, if not to disaster, than the danger of not going fast enough.'

#### White nations in southern Africa

Neither South Africa nor Southern Rhodesia (which, though not independent, gained virtual self-government in 1923) had any thought of preparing their native populations for eventual independence, however remote that independence might be. Their aim, which was shared by many white settlers in other parts of East Africa, was to create new white nations in southern Africa and 'keep the Kaffir in his place'. The case for white rule in southern Africa was bluntly put by a government official in Southern Rhodesia:

'We are in this country because we are better men. It is our only excuse for having taken

the land. For us to turn round now and ask the natives to help in directing the government of ourselves is ridiculous.'

After the First World War many people in both Britain and South Africa (including both Churchill and Smuts) expected Southern Rhodesia to seek union with South Africa. To their surprise, a referendum in Southern Rhodesia in 1922 turned down a proposal for union. This decision was a momentous one for the whole of Africa. As a fifth province within the Union of South Africa, Southern Rhodesia might have tipped the balance in favour of the English-speaking population, and made less likely both the dominance of the Afrikaner nationalists after World War Two and the era of apartheid which they inaugurated.

On the eve of World War Two there seemed no reason to anticipate either the racial tensions which were soon to show themselves in southern Africa or the pressures for independence which were soon to emerge within Africa as a whole. Though the phrase 'racial conflict' was in common use in southern Africa, it referred at that time, not to tensions between black and white, but to rivalry between the English and Afrikaner communities. Except in the Arab north, African opposition to European rule still seemed a negligible quantity. There was not a single nationalist movement of any importance struggling to achieve independence in any African colony south of the Sahara Desert.

The future of the African continent was decided far less by events in Africa itself between the wars, than by India's struggle for independence. India, as the popular

platitudes put it, was 'the brightest jewel in the imperial crown'. Its population of 315 million was three-quarters of that of the entire British Empire. It was in India that the decline of the British Empire began.

#### The Indian subcontinent

At the outbreak of the First World War British rule had seemed as secure in India as it appeared to be in Africa on the eve of the Second. The outburst of patriotism which greeted the declaration of war in Calcutta almost equalled that in London. In 1857 the use of Indian troops outside India had been one of the causes of the Indian Mutiny. Yet in 1914 Indian princes competed for the privilege of being the first to lead their forces to the front. While the princes offered troops, the middle classes offered money, and the Legislative Assembly volunteered to pay part of the cost of the war in Europe.

In retrospect, however, the war was to prove the beginning of the end of the British raj, and the beginning of the end, also, of the British Empire. As the war continued the war-weariness which became common in Europe spread to India, but, while soldiers on the Western Front at least believed that they were fighting for national survival, Indians seemed to be giving their lives in Mesopotamia and the Middle East simply for the extension of the British Empire. At the beginning of the war there had been no shortage of Indian recruits. During its later stages Britain was reduced to using press gangs.

Resentment against Britain was less serious for the future of the raj than the decline of British prestige. British rule in India rested, in the last resort, not on military coercion but on respect for the moral, as well as material, superiority of British civilisation. As soon as belief in that superiority disappeared, as it began to do during the First World War, the days of the British raj were numbered.

The British government responded to the unrest caused by the war with a pledge—the Montagu declaration of 1917—which was interpreted in India as a promise of dominion status. But by raising hopes which Britain seemed reluctant to fulfil the Montagu declaration only hastened the growth of opposition to British rule. The reforms introduced immediately after the war by the Government of India Act of 1919, though a substantial departure from the autocracy of the pre-war raj, seemed utterly inadequate as a preparation for self-government. As Adolf Hitler was later to observe, 'Britain has given to the Indians the opportunity of using as a weapon against her the non-fulfilment of her promises regarding a constitution.'



*Left: Gandhi visits England for the round table conference of 1931. 'An Englishman', he wrote, 'never respects you till you stand up to him. Then he begins to like you. He is afraid of nothing physical: but he is mortally afraid of his own conscience if you ever appeal to it and show him to be in the wrong'.*

*Below: 'The Determined Martyr'. Gandhi's efforts 'to get himself arrested by the reluctant Lord Irwin' had been the best publicised campaign in Indian history.*



### Gandhi and *satyagraha*

Before the First World War there had been no movement in India capable of organising a mass demand for independence. The Indian National Congress was still a middle-class debating society which met briefly each December and then lapsed into inactivity for another year. There was nothing in 1914 to suggest that Congress would emerge from the war as a mass movement which would become the focus of resistance to the British raj. The man who brought about this transformation was Mohandas Gandhi, a barrister of the Inner Temple who, more than any other man, set in motion the process which was to lead to the downfall of the British Empire.

Until the war Gandhi had lived almost all his adult life outside India. He had made his name as the champion of the Indian community in South Africa, and it was there that he developed the technique of *satyagraha*, or passive resistance which he was to use against the raj. Much of Gandhi's political success was due to the aura of personal sanctity about his person which won him the devotion of the Hindu masses. After his return to India he abandoned western dress in

favour of a loincloth, rigorously and ostentatiously adhered to the rules of poverty and chastity, and identified himself with the cause of 'the untouchables', the lowest class in Indian society, whom he renamed the *Harijans*, or the sons of God. Gandhi sought not merely political freedom from British rule, but spiritual emancipation from the materialism of western civilisation. He claimed for India precisely that moral superiority which the British raj had hitherto assumed for himself.

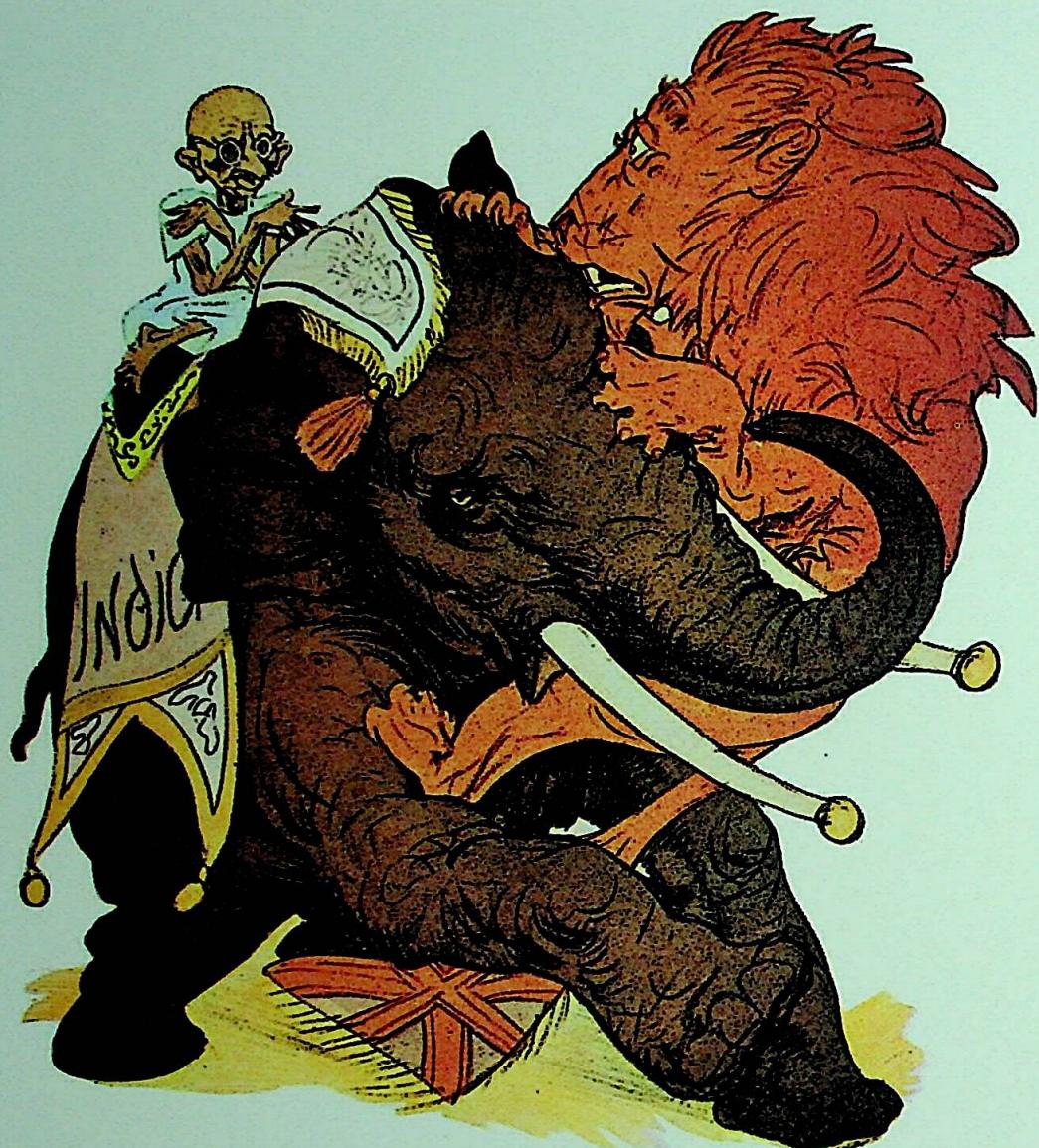
### The Amritsar massacre

The war was followed by an influenza epidemic which killed more Indians than the Western Front had killed Europeans. The epidemic added to the unrest caused by the war. The chief centre of unrest was the Punjab where most of the British press gangs had been concentrated. In April 1919 a prohibited meeting at the Punjabi town of Amritsar was dispersed without warning by troops using rifles and machine guns. The official casualty list was 379 dead and more than 1,000 wounded. General Dyer, the officer responsible for the order to open fire, was unrepentant. He followed the massacre by public floggings and forced all Indians

using a street where a British woman missionary had been assaulted to crawl along it on all fours.

The Amritsar massacre has been called 'the worst atrocity in the history of the British Empire'. But it was less the massacre itself than the attempts to justify it in Britain which produced a revulsion against British rule. Though Dyer was dismissed by the Indian government, there were many in Britain who vigorously defended his conduct. The House of Lords passed, by a large majority, a motion in Dyer's favour, and the readers of the *Morning Post* subscribed £30,000 in appreciation of his action.

The result of Amritsar was to give Gandhi control of Congress and its endorsement for his view that 'co-operation in any shape or form with this satanic government is sinful'. In the summer of 1920 Gandhi began a campaign of non-co-operation which, he forecast optimistically, would bring the British raj to its knees within a year. But though thousands of students left their schools and colleges, and thousands of middle-class members of Congress began spinning cotton by hand (an activity to which Gandhi attributed spiritual as well as economic significance) instead of buying it



*Below: 'Among the Untouchables at Ascot': an apt comparison by Low of the caste systems in Britain and India. British sport after the First World War was full of class distinctions: 'gentlemen' and 'players' (professionals) still had to enter the Lords pavilion by separate gates.*



from Lancashire, non-co-operation failed. It did so because thousands of Indian civil servants, even though sympathetic to Gandhi's aims, dared not take the enormous risk of resigning from their posts. By the end of 1921 many of Gandhi's followers were already losing heart.

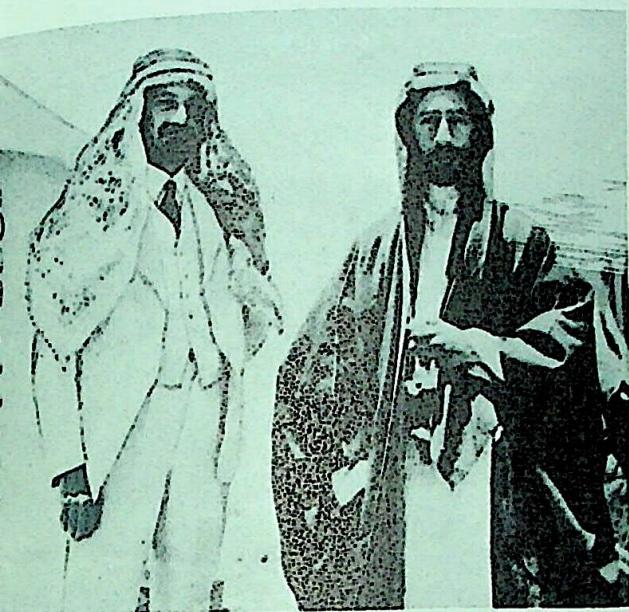
#### The failure of non-co-operation

Early in 1922, after twenty-two policemen had been burnt to death by a Hindu mob, Gandhi himself called off his campaign. The people of India, he concluded sadly, did not yet possess a sufficient understanding of the principle of non-violence for non-co-operation to achieve its aims. Soon afterwards, Gandhi was arrested and found guilty of incitement. 'It would be impossible', Gandhi was told by his judge, 'to ignore the fact that, in the eyes of millions of your countrymen, you are a great patriot and a great leader. Even those who differ from you in politics look upon you as a man of high ideals and of noble and even saintly life.' But Gandhi would 'not consider it unreasonable', the judge believed, that he should go to prison for six years: 'And I should like to say . . . that, if the course of events in India should make it possible for the government to reduce the period and release you, no one will be better pleased than I.'

With Gandhi's imprisonment, organised resistance to British rule seemed to have collapsed. By 1924 the Indian government felt, as Gandhi's judge had hoped, that it could safely release Gandhi from prison on the grounds of ill-health.

The British government still had no serious intention of preparing India for self-rule. Lord Birkenhead, the secretary of state for India, admitted in a letter to the viceroy in 1925: 'To me it is frankly inconceivable that India will ever be fit for Dominion self-government.' But Birkenhead thought

*Above left: the British lion grappling with Gandhi's India, a German cartoon of 1933. Britain as well as India owes Gandhi an enormous debt of gratitude for his leadership of the Indian independence movement between the wars. It was his influence primarily which kept India peaceful during those years of unavoidable tension. Under other leaders she might easily have slipped into a large-scale terrorist movement or exploded into a violent outbreak which could only have led to widespread repression, delayed independence, and left a legacy of bitterness . . . Gandhi evolved a method of non-violent revolution which in fact largely succeeded in maintaining the goodwill between the combatants which he preached'. (Percival Spear, India: A Modern History.)*



it as well to anticipate further trouble by making some conciliatory gesture to Indian opinion. In 1927, therefore, the British government established the all-party Simon Commission (which included among its members the young Clement Attlee) to enquire into the Indian constitution.

### Civil disobedience

By omitting to include on it any Indian member, however, Britain made the Simon Commission appear a calculated insult to the Indian people. Even those Indians best disposed towards Britain refused to have anything to do with it. Like the Amritsar massacre, the Simon Commission discredited the moderates and played into the hands of the militants. In December 1928 Congress issued an ultimatum to the British government demanding self-government within a year. When the year expired it declared India an independent state and authorised Gandhi to launch a new campaign of civil disobedience. The new campaign was to include, for the first time, sins of commission as well as omission: a programme of non-violent crime on so vast a scale that Gandhi believed the administration of justice would grind to a halt.

Gandhi began his campaign with a crime brilliantly calculated to show the raj at its most ridiculous and its most unjust. Probably the least defensible of all the methods of taxation used by the raj was its salt monopoly, reminiscent of the hated *gabelle* in pre-revolutionary France. It was an offence not merely to sell but even to possess salt not purchased from the British monopoly, and it was this monopoly which Gandhi decided to challenge. Amid the glare of world-wide publicity he began a three-

week walk to the Indian Ocean. Having arrived at the sea-shore, he was photographed by newsreel cameras solemnly breaking the law by extracting salt from the sea. After a brief period of uncertainty while the raj made up its mind, Gandhi was sent to prison, soon to be joined by 60,000 of his followers. The British government hurriedly called a 'round-table conference' in London to discuss the future of India, but its discussions were made meaningless by the absence of any Congress representative.

Early in 1931 the British viceroy, Lord Irwin (later, as Lord Halifax, British foreign secretary at the time of the Munich crisis), released Gandhi from prison and invited him to begin talks with him. Gandhi replied that he would like to meet 'not the viceroy but the man within the viceroy'. He showed the same flair for publicity in his meetings with Irwin as he had earlier shown on his walk to the sea. He went on foot each day to the viceroy's palace, surrounded by crowds of his supporters and large numbers of reporters, and carrying an aluminium saucepan containing his food for the day. In Britain Churchill fulminated against:

'the nauseating and humiliating spectacle of this one-time Inner Temple lawyer, now seditious fakir, striding half-naked up the steps of the viceroy's palace, there to negotiate and parley on equal terms with the representative of the King-Emperor.'

The result of the talks was the 'Gandhi-Irwin truce'. Irwin agreed to the release of all political prisoners, except those convicted of crimes of violence. Gandhi agreed to call off the civil disobedience campaign.

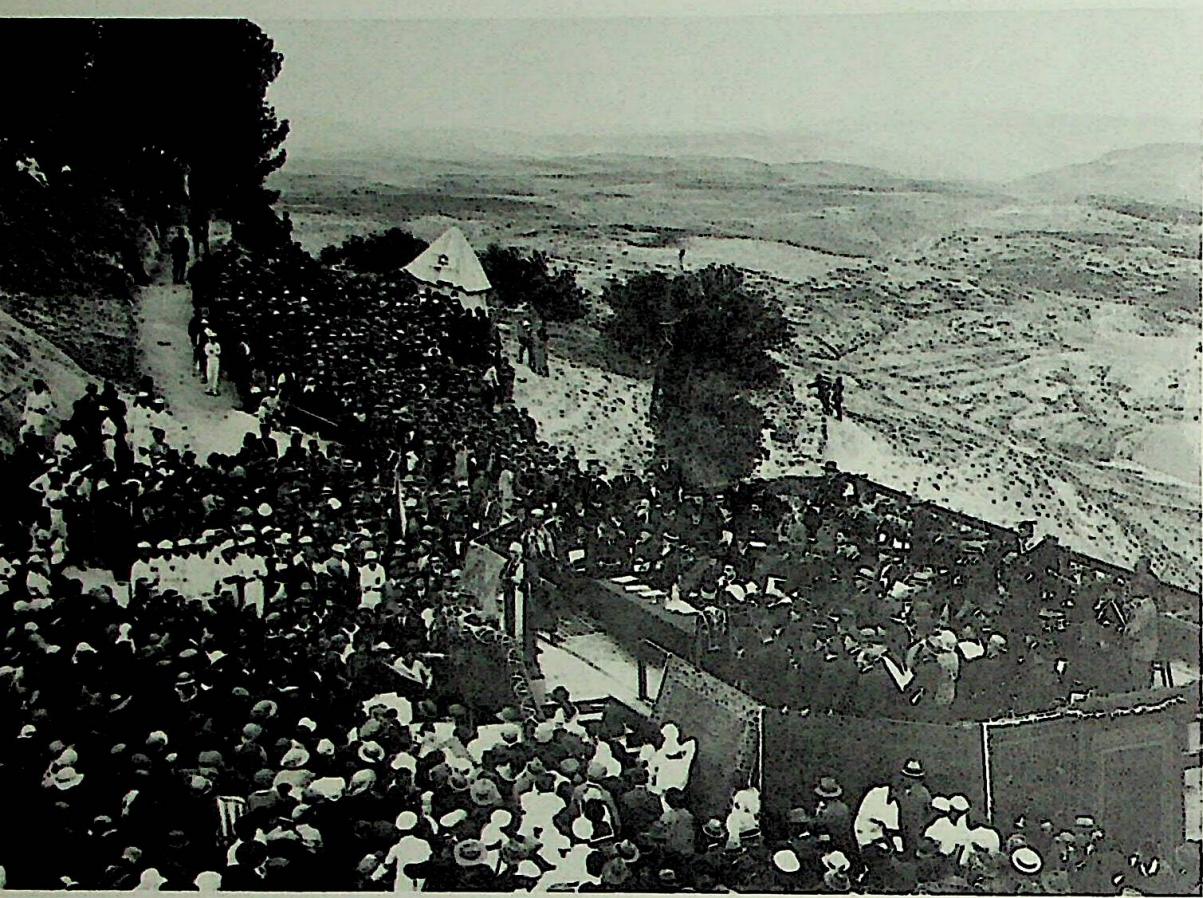
*Above left: a remarkable photograph, taken in 1921, showing Chaim Weizmann, the Zionist leader, in Arab headdress talking to King Feisal of Syria (later of Iraq). But the honeymoon period during which many Jewish leaders tried to persuade the Arabs voluntarily to accept Jewish immigration was to be a short one. (The Executive of the World Zionist Organisation, Jerusalem.)*

*Above: the wailing wall in Jerusalem, all that remains of Herod's palace: the most sacred shrine of the Jewish religion. Even before the sounding of the Jewish 'national home' in Palestine, devout Jews had traditionally travelled to Jerusalem in old age to die in the promised land; during the nineteenth century a new suburb of Jerusalem had been built to accommodate them.*

and attend a second round-table conference in London.

The truce, however, lasted less than a year. In London Gandhi demanded immediate dominion status, and the conference ended in deadlock. Within a few weeks of his return to India at the beginning of 1932, Gandhi was once again in prison. Congress fell, once more, into partial eclipse as it had done ten years before, when he was first imprisoned. Most Indians remained sympathetic towards its aims, but few were yet prepared to continue an indefinite struggle with the raj.

The British government and parliament continued, none the less, (as the pages of Hansard show) to be preoccupied with the future of the Indian subcontinent. A succession of 'fact-finding' commissions went back and forth to India, returning, as Churchill complained, laden with 'bulky



*Above: Lord Balfour opens the new Hebrew University on the summit of Mount Scopus (next to the Mount of Olives) on 1 April 1925. Balfour had become one of the heroes of the Zionist movement after the Balfour declaration in November 1917 when he had promised the support of the British government for the establishment of a 'national home for the Jewish people' in Palestine. His earlier suggestion, as prime minister in 1903, that the Jews found a national home in Uganda had been less well received. (Central Zionist Archives, Jerusalem.)*

and indigestible sheaves'. The final result of these deliberations was the Government of India Act of 1935, ridiculed by Churchill as 'a monstrous monument of sham built by the Pygmies'. Under it central government remained safely in the hands of the viceroy, but the provinces acquired a high degree of local autonomy and responsible government.

Congress was at first bitterly divided over its attitude to the new constitution, with its left wing under Jawaharlal Nehru urging rejection of it. Eventually, however, Congress agreed to contest the first elections held under the new constitution in 1937, and won control of eight of the eleven provinces. The experience of government during the two years before the Second World War was a turning-point in the history of Congress. It marked its transformation from a movement seeking to gain its ends by unconstitutional means into a parliamentary party. Congress politicians and British

officials, who had hitherto regarded each other with deep suspicion, now discovered that relations between them were often surprisingly good—a discovery which did much to smooth the course of independence negotiations after the war.

#### 'The land of the pure'

The great mistake made by Congress during the nineteen-thirties was in its treatment of the Muslims. During the nineteen-twenties Congress leaders had, on the whole, been conscious of the need for the Hindu majority to respect the rights of the Muslim minority. In ten years there had been five Muslim presidents of Congress. 'Hindu-Muslim unity', said Gandhi, 'is our breath of life.' The idea of Pakistan ('the land of the pure') originated, not on the Indian subcontinent itself, but among a group of Muslim undergraduates studying in England at Cambridge University in 1932.

Even in the middle of the nineteen-thirties, despite signs of tension between the Hindu and Muslim communities, a separate Muslim state after independence was still the ambition of only a small minority of Indian Muslims. Jinnah, the leader of the Muslim League, declared in 1937: 'There is really no difference between the League and Congress. . . We shall always be glad to co-operate with Congress in their constructive programme.'

At the 1937 elections the League declared its willingness to form coalitions with Congress in the new provincial governments. Elated with their electoral success, however, Congress leaders refused to allow the Mus-

lim League any share of power in the states which they controlled. No British government between the wars made any mistake of comparable magnitude in its Indian policy. Denied its rightful share in the government of India, the Muslim League was forced back on the idea of Pakistan: an ambition which was to be fulfilled only at the cost of a religious civil war on the Indian subcontinent and the loss of a million lives.

## The Middle East

Britain's relations with the people of Egypt were worse than with any other of its subject peoples. The Egyptians became derisively known as 'wogs', a term later more broadly used to indicate the British image of the shifty foreigner. The British themselves, however, had shown a degree of shiftiness in establishing themselves in Egypt which had no parallel in the history of Victorian imperialism.

Britain had sent troops to Egypt in 1882 to put down an anti-European uprising, insisting that these troops would leave as soon as order had been restored. 'An indefinite occupation', declared Gladstone, the British prime minister, 'would be absolutely at variance with all the principles and views of Her Majesty's Government, and the pledges they have given Europe. . . .' Though this pledge was many times repeated, the 'temporary occupation' was to last for seventy years.

Britain broke her word for strategic, rather than for economic, reasons. Even between the wars oil was still only a minor consideration in British policy in the Middle East. On the eve of the Second World War the whole of the Middle East produced no more than 5 per cent of the world's oil. But the Suez canal, which ran through Egyptian territory, was regarded as the most vital link in Britain's imperial communications, the 'lifeline of the Empire'. In British eyes the safety of this lifeline demanded the permanent presence of British troops on Egyptian soil and British control of Egyptian foreign policy.

Despite the length of its military occupation, Britain's protectorate in Egypt lasted officially for only eight years. Its protectorate began soon after the outbreak of the First World War and came allegedly to an end in 1922 when Britain declared Egypt independent. Both British troops and the British high commissioner remained, however, and Britain claimed continued responsibility for Egypt's defence and foreign policy, and for the protection of foreign interests in Egypt. The nationalist Wafd party reasonably declared that independence on these terms would be a farce. The sultan, Ahmed Fuad, was torn between his dislike of the British and his loathing for the politicians of the Wafd, most of whom combined nationalism and corruption in

about equal proportions.

After a year's haggling, largely devoted to increasing his own powers, Fuad agreed to independence on terms which raised him from sultan to the status of a rather more than constitutional monarch. Though Britain slightly relaxed its grip on Egypt after the accession of King Farouk in 1936, British troops remained in Egypt for another twenty years.

#### 'A story of crude duplicity'

The greater part of the Middle East in 1914 still belonged to the decaying Turkish Empire. Besides Egypt, only Cyprus and an assortment of sheikdoms under British protection in the Persian Gulf were under European control. The peace settlement which followed the First World War, however, established European rule over almost the whole of the Middle East. Britain's part in bringing about this transformation was more disreputable than any other episode in the history of its twentieth-century diplomacy. Ramsay MacDonald described it thus:

'We encouraged a revolt in Turkey by a promise [in 1915] to create an Arab kingdom from the Arab provinces of the [Turkish] Empire including Palestine. At the same

time we were encouraging the Jews to help us by promising them that Palestine would be placed at their disposal for settlement and government; and also at the same time, we were making with the French the Sykes-Picot Agreement partitioning the territories which we had instructed our governor-general in Egypt to promise to the Arabs. The story is one of crude duplicity, and we cannot expect to escape the reprobation which is bound to follow as a sequel.'

As part of the post-war settlement Britain and France divided between them most of Turkey's former Arab empire. France took Syria and Lebanon, Britain acquired Iraq (formerly known as Mesopotamia), Transjordan and Palestine. Saudi Arabia, which neither country wanted, was given to the Arabs as an independent kingdom.

The horse-trading between Britain and France in the Middle East was made more respectable by the new principle of 'trusteeship'. Both countries acquired their shares of the Turkish Empire not as colonies but as mandates from the League of Nations and recognised a duty to watch over their 'progressive development . . . until such time as they can stand alone'. Most of the Middle East, however, gained its independence only after World War Two. Though the British mandate in Iraq ended formally in 1932, Britain continued, as in Egypt, a form of indirect rule by virtue of so-called 'treaty rights' which gave it military and financial control.

One unexpected by-product of British rule in Iraq was the birth of the Royal Air Force as an independent service. In 1922 Britain succeeded in quelling a tribal revolt

in Iraq not, as in the past, by a military expedition but by bombing from the air. For the first time it seemed possible to envisage a European war decided as much in the air as on the ground. As a result, Britain became in 1923 the first country in the world to free its air force from dependence on the other services.

#### 'A national home for the Jewish people'

The most serious long-term problem bequeathed by Britain's devious wartime diplomacy in the Middle East arose from its promise to the Jews. The terms of Britain's mandate in Palestine made it responsible for putting this promise into effect by 'the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people'. The Arabs, who made up more than 90 per cent of the Palestinian population, were at once assured by Britain that the Jewish national home would not become a Jewish national state, and that all their 'civil and religious rights' would be respected. A national state, however, was precisely what the Zionist movement (which was responsible for the idea of a 'national home' in Palestine) intended to achieve—a state which, in the words of Dr Weizmann, its leader, would be 'as Jewish as England is English'.

As a first step towards this goal, Zionists insisted on the strict separation of Arab and Jewish communities. Jewish parents refused to send their children to mixed government schools. Arab tenants and farm-workers were evicted from all land bought by the Jewish National Fund. David Ben-Gurion, later the first prime minister of the state of Israel, organised a series of strikes against Jewish employers of Arab labour. The Jewish Agency, which co-ordinated Jewish settlement in Palestine, sought, with some success, to make itself a state within a state. Until the First World War the Arabs had been the only people living in contact with the Jews who had never persecuted them. The birth of Arab anti-semitism between the wars was the work not of Adolf Hitler but of the Zionists.

One of the first British ministers to deal with the Palestinian problem was Winston Churchill, colonial secretary during the final year of Lloyd George's coalition. In a White Paper published in 1922, Churchill correctly defined the crux of the problem (though in an uncharacteristically inelegant phrase) as one of relating Jewish immigration to Palestine's 'absorptive capacity'. During the nineteen-twenties Palestine's 'absorptive capacity' never seemed in danger. In most years, there were no more than 5,000 Jewish immigrants. At such a rate of immigration, Arab predominance in Palestine was not in danger, and British administrators could look forward to an eventual lessening of the tension between the two communities.





What no British government during the nineteen-twenties could be expected to foresee was the vast influx, in the next decade, of Jewish refugees from Nazi persecution. Though Britain tried in vain to stem the flow in 1939, the Second World War made it unstoppable. It was less the Zionists than Adolf Hitler who made possible the creation, in 1948, of the Jewish state of Israel out of most of pre-war Palestine.

### The European empires

The British Empire was larger, both in size and population, than all other European empires put together. The empires of Italy, Belgium, Spain, and Portugal were all virtually confined to Africa. That of the Netherlands consisted only of the Dutch East Indies and Dutch Guiana. Germany had no empire at all. Curiously, it was the oldest and most decrepit empires—those of Spain and Portugal—which were to last the longest. In Asia the last European colony to gain its independence was the tiny Portuguese enclave of Goa, on the

Indian subcontinent. In Africa, by the end of the nineteen-sixties, Portugal's empire was larger than Great Britain's.

Apart from Britain, only France—with colonies in Africa, Asia, the Middle East, the West Indies, and the Pacific—could claim to be a world power. But even France's empire, both in size and population, was less than half of Britain's. It was also far more rebellious. In Africa, Asia, and the Middle East, France was faced with armed rebellion on a scale not encountered by Britain until after World War Two. During the nineteen-twenties there were serious revolts in both Syria and Morocco. The pacification of Morocco was not complete until the middle of the nineteen-thirties and Syria never really accepted French rule. In Indo-China the French administration seemed during 1930 to have caught a nationalist rebellion in its early stages, and restored order by hundreds of executions. But by the beginning of the Second World War, there was already a powerful communist underground movement led by Ho Chi Minh which,

once the war was over, was to launch a successful struggle for independence.

Though the French Empire was more autocratic than the British, Frenchmen were less troubled than Englishmen by racial differences between themselves and their colonial peoples. The long-term aim of the French colonial administration was to turn its subjects into Frenchmen. A British minister remarked in 1926:

'In these matters we are apparently by nature the exact opposite of the French. The French have no doubt that the more French they can make French Africa in language, sentiment, custom, and outlook, the better. We cannot help doubting whether any persons not of our race can really become British in this way. . . .'

Increasingly French colonial enthusiasts regarded their colonies—especially in Africa—not as colonies at all but as extensions of France itself. For this reason many Frenchmen regarded their own empire, even though far smaller than the British, as



*Above : The Colonial Empires after the First World War. Considering the almost random way in which the British Empire appeared to be dotted about the globe, H. G. Wells' Mr Britling felt it to be 'a clumsy collection of strange accidents'. The same description could equally be applied to the other European Empires.*

*Right : Ho Chi Minh in 1946. Like Mao, Ho was a nationalist before he became a communist. 'In the beginning', he admitted in 1960, 'it was patriotism and not communism which induced me to believe in Lenin and the Third International. But little by little . . . I came to realise that socialism and communism alone are capable of emancipating workers and down-trodden people all over the world'.*

superior to it. As one Gaullist minister was later to remark, referring to the supposed enthusiasm of Algerians for union with France: 'This is something unique! Who ever heard of any Pakistani shouting "Pakistan anglais"?'

The imperial mission was a transitory experience. Most people in France and Britain did not take it seriously until the very end of the nineteenth century. By the nineteen-sixties, most of them no longer believed in it. The young Disraeli had described most British colonies in the nineteenth century as 'wretched millstones'. Little more than a century later, such a description exactly fitted Britain's only remaining mainland colony, Rhodesia. But

the imperial mission left a legacy behind. During the nineteen-fifties Dean Acheson described Britain as having 'lost an empire but not yet found a role'. Other peoples who were equally civilised and equally prosperous, like the Swiss and Scandinavians, did not feel that they needed to find a role precisely because they had never had an empire to lose. The imperial mission left in post-imperial Britain and in post-imperial France the conviction that the world still needed the light of their example.





# Prosperity and depression

*Optimism returns briefly to Europe; the Wall Street crash sparks off a crisis in the world economy; the Great Depression undermines democracy.*

'The man who builds a factory builds a temple. The man who works there worships there.' (President Coolidge)

The later nineteen-twenties were the last period of real optimism in the history of Europe. The years of optimism began in 1925 with the treaty of Locarno, a non-aggression pact between France, Germany, and Belgium, guaranteed by Britain and Italy. Locarno, said Sir Austen Chamberlain, would be remembered as 'the real dividing line between the years of war and the years of peace'. To many European statesmen it seemed a landmark in European history, the end of an era of deep hostility between France and Germany which had continued without a break from the Franco-Prussian war of 1870 to the occupation of the Ruhr in 1923. Geneviève Tabouis, the most famous French journalist of her generation, wrote of her reaction to Locarno:

'I was literally drunk with joy. It seemed too

good to be true that Germany, our enemy of yesterday, had actually signed the pact with its eight clauses of reconciliation! From now on, no more fears for the future! No more war!'

## The Locarno honeymoon

The reconciliation between France and Germany was strengthened by the friendship of their foreign ministers, Aristide Briand and Gustav Stresemann. Briand was the greatest exponent of what A. P. Herbert called 'Locarno blarney', the emotional incantations to peace which flowed from the lips of most statesmen of the period. His oratory earned him the title of 'the archangel of peace', and he was regularly depicted by French cartoonists in the act of turning swords into ploughshares. Briand's most famous speech was his welcome to Stresemann on Germany's admission to the League of Nations in September 1926. In retrospect, his speech seems tinged with bathos: 'From this day forth women

*Above: the Locarno honeymoon. One of many informal meetings between Sir Austen Chamberlain (monocled), Stresemann (on Chamberlain's left), and Briand (far right).*

will be able to fix their eyes on little children without feeling their hearts torn by anxiety!' But it captured completely the mood of the Locarno honeymoon. No speech in European history has aroused so much enthusiasm over so much of Europe.

Soon after welcoming Stresemann to the League of Nations, Briand invited him to a private lunch at Thoiry in the French Alps. The two men announced after lunch that they had 'established the basis for a political understanding', though the nature of this understanding was never afterwards discovered. 'You can call it the mystery of Thoiry', Briand told journalists. 'What a good title for a thriller!' But, he added whimsically, 'while we were sitting at luncheon we watched the clouds lift from the top of Mont Blanc, and we both agreed that



its snows were no whiter than the bottom of our two hearts'.

#### 'Briand's spiritual wedding with peace'

The high point of the Locarno honeymoon was the Briand-Kellogg treaty of 1928. In April 1927 Briand proposed to the American government that France and the United States should celebrate the tenth anniversary of the American entry into the First World War by a pact renouncing war as an instrument of national policy. Kellogg, the American secretary of state, replied six months later by suggesting (with one eye on the next presidential election) that such a pact should be extended to include the whole world. As a first step towards this end, the representatives of fifteen leading powers met in Paris in August 1928 to

sign a treaty by which all agreed (though sometimes with reservations) to outlaw war.

The signature of the pact was surrounded by a slightly idiotic ceremonial, devised by Briand, and satirised by one French newspaper as 'the celebration of Briand's spiritual wedding with peace'. Almost every state in the world hastened to add its signature to it, including even the Soviet Union which, like the United States, was not a member of the League. Only five states—Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Saudi Arabia, and the Yemen—refused to sign. The pact was the supreme example of 'Locarno blarney', of the belief that words alone possessed the power to prevent aggression. Its only effect during the nineteen-thirties was possibly to make states more reluctant to declare war before they began to wage it.

## THE HOPE OF THE WORLD



*Blessed are the peacemakers.*

*Left: Stresemann, the German foreign minister, and Luther, the German chancellor, as 'the doves of peace'. (German cartoon of 1926.)*

*Above: Ramsay MacDonald shaking hands with peace: a Labour party poster. (Institute of Social History, Amsterdam.)*

*Below: Briand, the French foreign minister turning swords into ploughshares. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)*

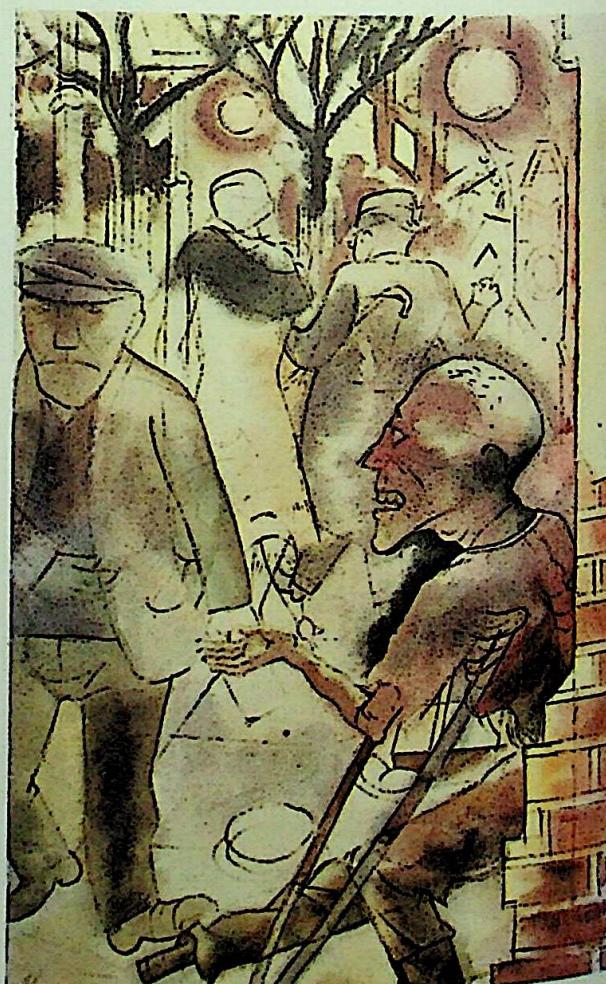




## The League of Nations

Looking back in 1930 on the achievements of the nineteen-twenties, most European statesmen still felt optimistic for the future. The League of Nations, though derided at its outset by those who considered themselves political realists, was now an accepted part of international diplomacy. It had, according to *The Times*, 'quietly made good'. The League had had so far to face only one major challenge to its authority: Mussolini's seizure of the Greek island of Corfu in 1923 after the murder in Greece of an Italian general. As a result of mediation through the League, Mussolini had agreed to withdraw from Corfu in return for fifty million lire from Greece. Though this

*The General Strike: called by the T.U.C. in May 1926 in support of the miners, and denounced by Baldwin, the prime minister, as a threat to democratic government and 'the road to anarchy and ruin'. Left: A London bus driven by a volunteer driver is fitted with barbed wire to repel boarders. Below left: the upper orders rally to the defence of democracy: Lady Gisborough, Lady Malcom, and Lady Louis Mountbatten run a soup kitchen in Hyde Park for volunteer workers. The General Strike lasted for nine days. It was followed by a sharp fall both in the number of strikes and in the number of union members.*



settlement clearly favoured the stronger power, it was widely regarded as a victory for so new an organisation. Without the League, it was argued, the seizure of Corfu might have developed into a European war. The fact that for the remainder of the nineteen-twenties the League had to face no further challenge to its authority from any major power seemed to demonstrate its growing authority.

Introducing a report on the League's first ten years in 1930, its secretary-general summed up the prospects for the future by quoting from a speech by General Smuts:

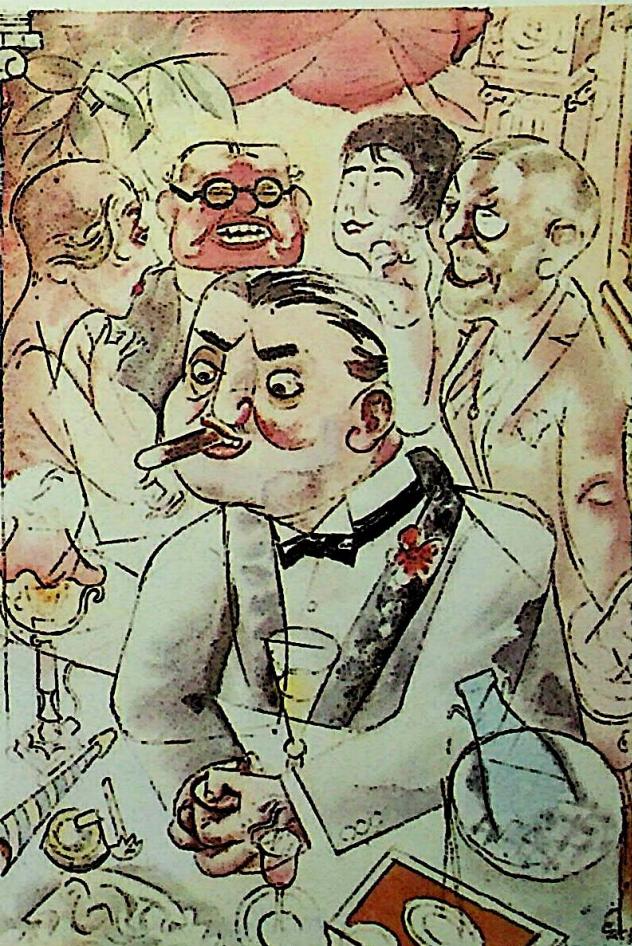
'Looked at in its true light, in the light of the age and of the time-honoured ideas and practice of mankind, we are beholding an amazing thing—we are witnessing one of the great miracles of history. . . . The League may be a difficult scheme to work, but the significant thing is that the Powers have pledged themselves to work it . . . Mankind has, as it were, at one bound and in the short space of ten years, jumped from the old order to the new, across a gulf which may yet prove to be the greatest break or divide in human history. . . .'

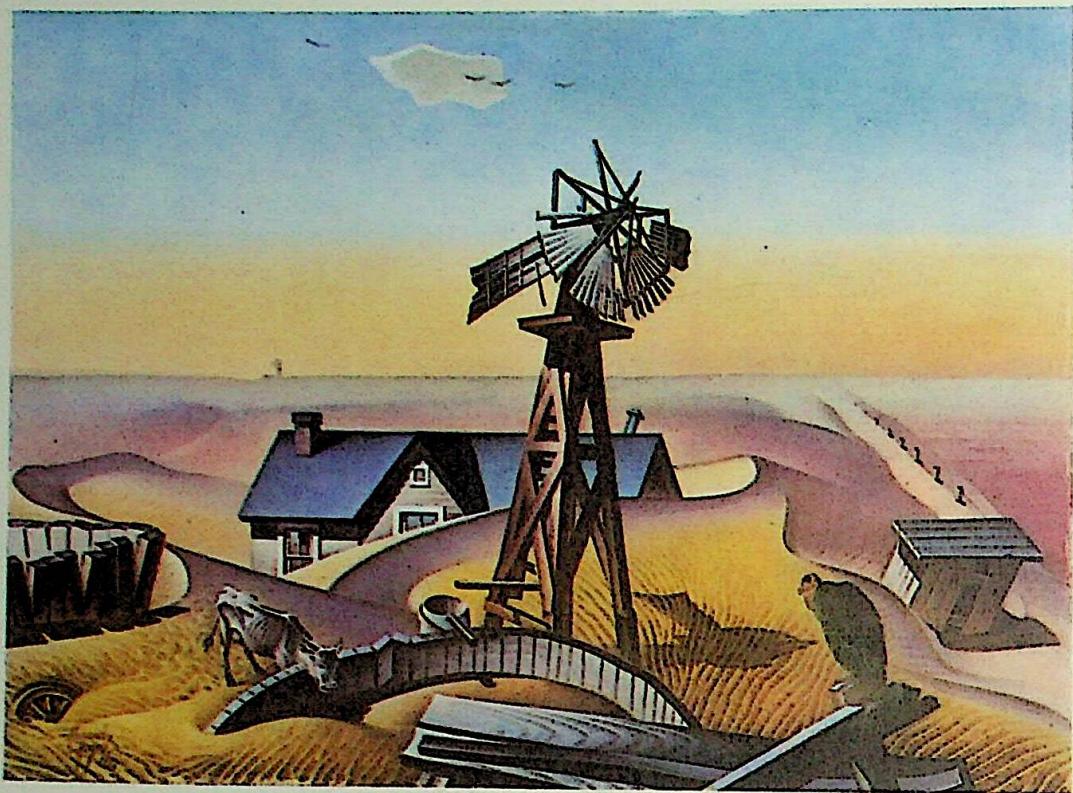
### The return of prosperity

The optimism of the Locarno honeymoon was in part a consequence of economic prosperity. In 1925, the year of the Locarno pact, European production for the first time reached its pre-war level. The return

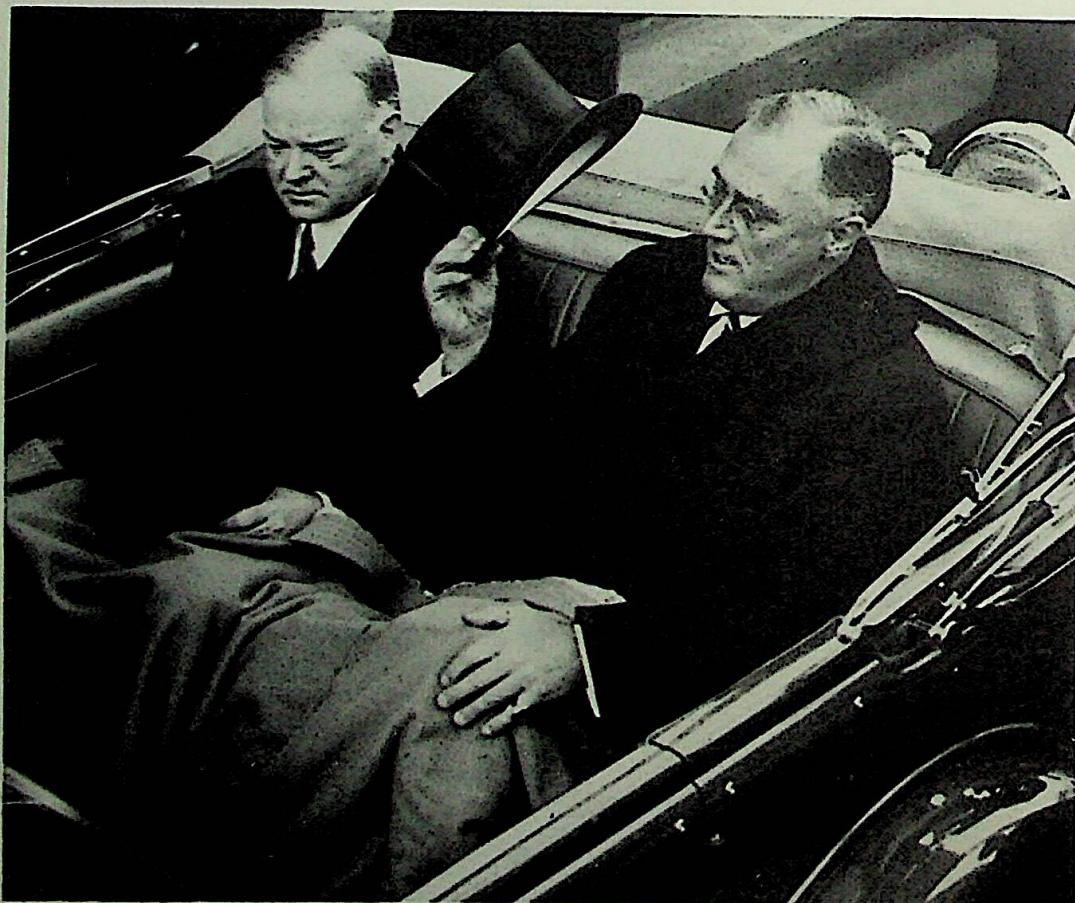
*The prosperous years in Weimar Germany.*  
Below left: 'The Millionaires' by George Grosz contrasts the prosperity of industrialists and war profiteers with the plight of the war-wounded and unemployed. To a generation of left-wing students during the nineteen-twenties Grosz's paintings seemed, as Hannah Arendt wrote later, 'not satires but realistic reportage: we knew these types: they were all around us'. (Marlborough Fine Art Gallery, London.)

Below: 'Dancing in a bar in Baden-Baden' by Max Beckmann. Like Grosz, Beckmann invariably portrayed the prosperity of the Weimar Republic as one aspect of its decadence. Both men, along with many other Weimar artists and writers, were derisively described by those they satirised as 'Kultur-Bolsheviks'. (Frank Gallerie, Munich.)





*Below: Franklin D. Roosevelt with his predecessor, Herbert Hoover, on the way to his inauguration as president of the United States in January 1933. Roosevelt had won the presidential election on a pledge of 'a New Deal for the American people'. Despite the achievements of his first term of office he began his second term as president four years later by saying: 'I see one-third of a nation ill-housed, ill-clad, ill-nourished'.*



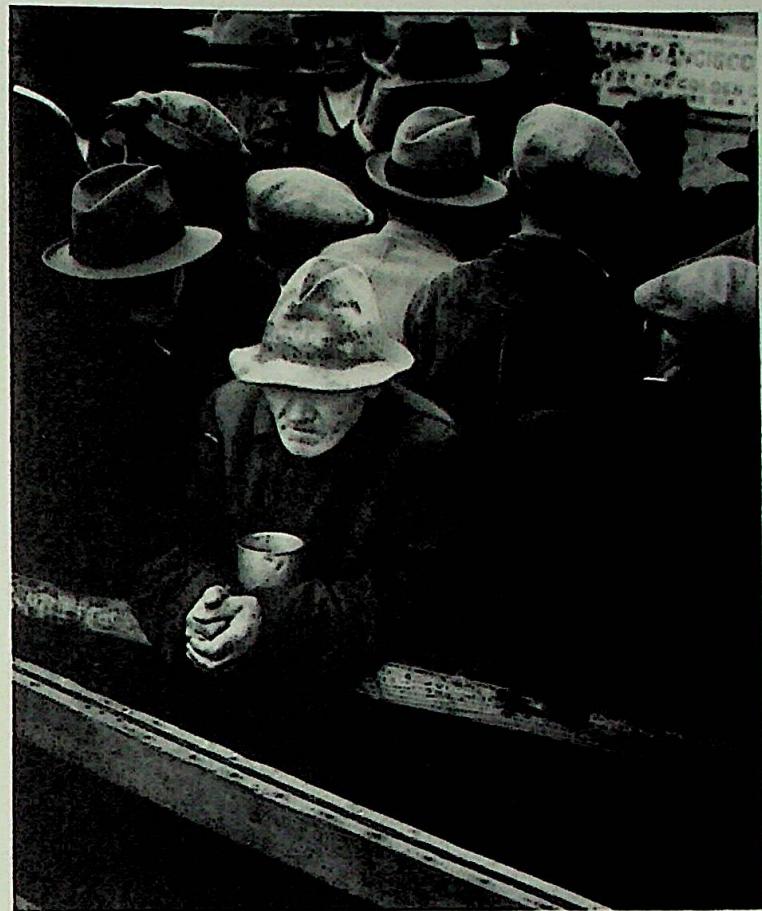
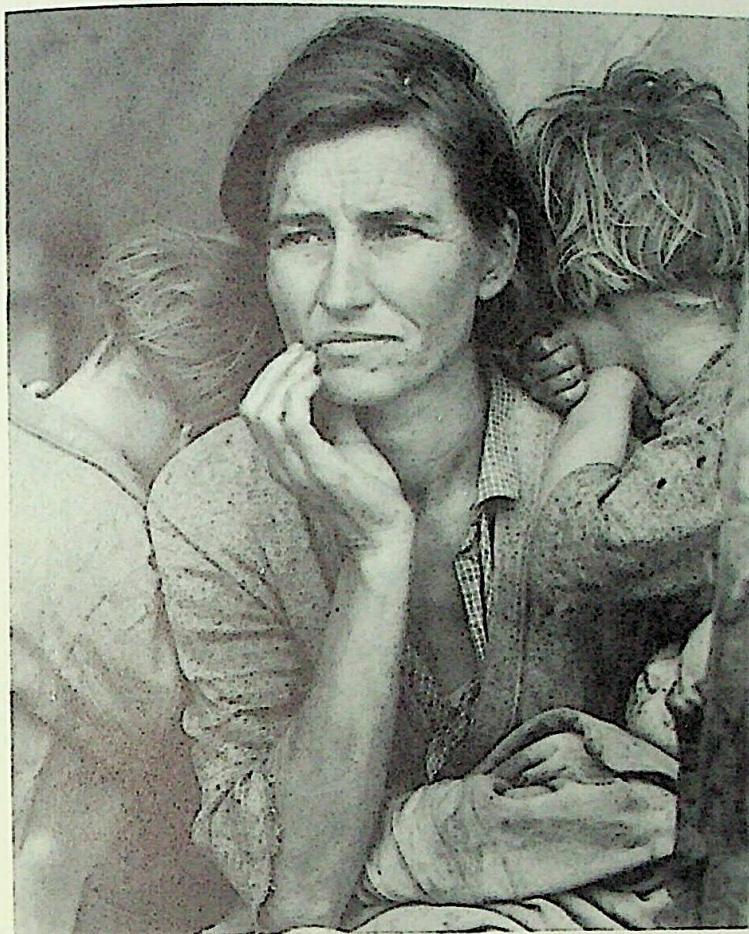
of prosperity was symbolised by Winston Churchill's decision as chancellor of the exchequer to put Britain back on the gold standard in the same year and make sterling once again freely convertible into gold. By 1928 all other European currencies had followed suit. Between 1925 and 1929, the volume of international trade rose by almost 20 per cent and by 1929 Europe's share of world production was once again as large as before the First World War.

The prosperous years of the later nineteen-twenties were characterised by conservative statesmen who contrived to make a virtue of their own inertia. Calvin Coolidge had won the 1924 election in the United States by telling the electorate to 'Keep Cool with Coolidge'. Stanley Baldwin, similarly, urged the British people to trust 'honest Stanley' and be content with a policy of 'safety first'. Though there were many gaps in the prosperity of the later nineteen-twenties, the Conservative governments of the time paid little attention to them. In Britain, for example, there were never less than a million unemployed. Yet, even after the General Strike of 1926, parliament contrived to spend more time discussing the revision of the Anglican Prayer Book than the problem of unemployment. Happily for the Conservative party, the inactivity of Baldwin's government enabled it to lose the 1929 election, just in time to leave a Labour government to face the depression.

The great flaw in the European prosperity of the Locarno era was that it depended for its continuance on the unstable prosperity of the American economy. This dependence was one of the most important consequences of the First World War. For a century before 1914 investment had flowed across the Atlantic from west to east. Ever since it has flowed emphatically in the opposite direction. The European economy in the nineteen-twenties depended for its prosperity on massive American investment. In the five years from 1925 to 1929 alone, this investment amounted to no less than 2,900 million dollars. Germany, with a total debt of 1,000 million dollars, depended on American investment not merely to remain prosperous but even to remain solvent. Yet the continued availability of American investment depended on the continuation of a speculative boom which ran increasingly out of control.

By the summer of 1929 share prices on Wall Street were nearly four times higher than four years before, and five million shares were changing hands every day. Most Americans seemed to imagine that the prosperity of the Locarno era would go on for ever. President Coolidge told Congress in his last message on the State of the Union, in December 1928:

*'No Congress of the United States ever assembled, on surveying the state of the*



Union, has met with a more pleasing prospect than that which appears at the present time. In the domestic field there is tranquillity and contentment and the highest record of years of prosperity. In the foreign field there is peace, the goodwill which comes from mutual understanding.'

Herbert Hoover, Coolidge's successor as president of the United States, was equally optimistic. In his election campaign he promised Americans not merely 'a full dinner pail, but 'a full garage' too. Not even the economists seemed to have any premonition of what was coming. A fortnight before the biggest crash in the history of the American stock market, Professor Irving Fisher, the doyen of Yale economists confidently predicted, 'I expect to see the stock market a good deal higher than it is today within a few months'.

### The Great Depression

On 'Black Thursday', 24 October, 1929, the speculative bubble burst. In the next nine days 40,000 million dollars were wiped off the value of American securities. With the collapse of the stock-market, lending to Europe ceased and all existing loans were recalled as soon as their term expired. Since most American loans had been short-term, their withdrawal from Europe came with catastrophic suddenness. Yet while calling in its loans, the United States continued until the summer of 1931 to

demand punctilious payment of war debts owing to it. And by raising import duties to an average level of 40 per cent the United States made it impossible for its foreign debtors to pay their way by increased exports. As one country after another sought to balance its books by cutting imports, the inevitable result was the collapse of world trade.

The prosperity of the world economy depended not merely on American foreign investment but on a high rate of American consumption. In 1928 the United States consumed nearly 40 per cent of the world's nine chief primary products (food and raw materials). In the long run it was the primary producers who were hardest hit, both by the collapse of world trade and by the contraction of the American market. Even on the eve of the Second World War most primary producers were still unable to afford much more than a third of what they had been able to buy from abroad before the Great Depression.

Contrary to popular belief, Britain was not one of the countries which suffered most from the depression. Despite its loss of foreign earnings, the slump in the price of its imports of food and raw materials meant that at the worst moments of the depression the net loss to its balance of payments was only £25,000,000 a year. While industrial production in Germany and the United States fell by almost 50 per cent in three years, British production, in 1932 was still 84 per cent of the figure for 1929.

*Two faces of the American Depression.*  
Above: the industrial unemployed: the 'breadline' San Francisco queuing for relief. (Oakland Museum, California.) Far left: 'Drought-stricken area' by Alexander Hogue: part of the Dust Bowl in the Great Plains. (Dallas Museum of Fine Art, Texas.) Drought and massive soil-erosion during the nineteen-thirties forced many thousands of farmers from the Southern Great Plains to leave their homes. Many, like the 'migrant mother' (above left) in Dorothea Lange's photograph, were lured to California by false rumours of well-paid work. Their plight is movingly described in John Steinbeck's novel, *The Grapes of Wrath*. (Library of Congress, Washington D.C.)

Though there was heavy unemployment in Britain's export industries, there were also large sections of industry (especially in the south east) which were almost unaffected by the slump, and in which real wages actually rose during the depression.

In the long run, the political consequences of the depression were more serious than the economic. All over the world economic crisis was followed by political crisis. Even in Britain, famous for its political stability, the depression brought down the Labour government in August 1931 and replaced it by a National government, mainly composed of Conservative ministers, under the nominal leadership of the former Labour leader, Ramsay MacDonald. In two con-

tinents, Latin America and Europe, the political consequences of the depression were particularly severe. In both, economic collapse produced a rapid growth of authoritarian regimes.

### Political collapse in Latin America

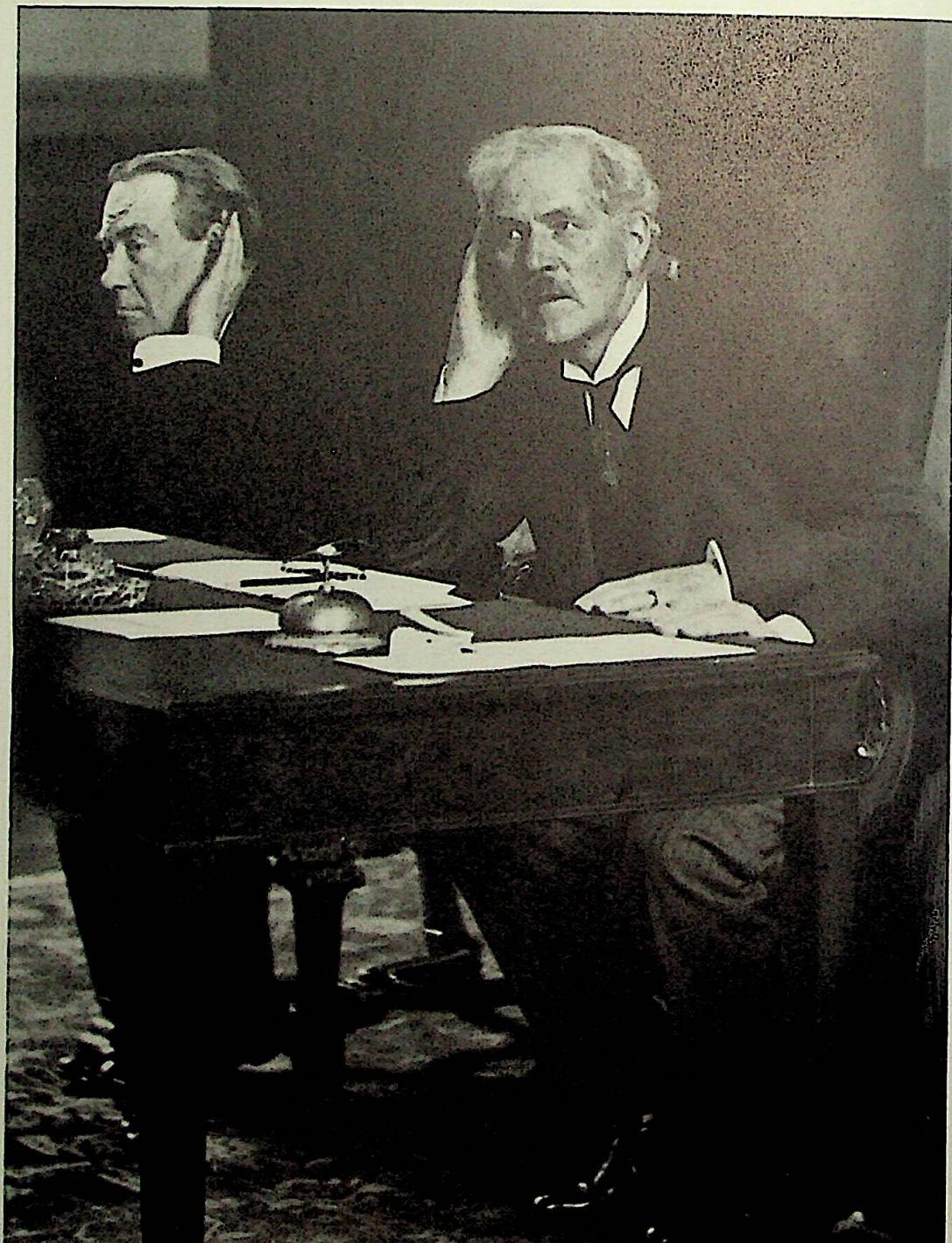
For Latin America, as for Europe, the nineteen-twenties had been a period of relative stability. In most of the score of independent Latin American states revolution seemed, by 1930, to have become a thing of the past. Foreign investment had poured into Latin America at the rate of more than 5,000 million dollars in a single decade, while Europe and North America provided steadily expanding markets for Latin American foodstuffs and raw materials. Then, in 1930, both the foreign capital and foreign markets, on which the prosperity of the nineteen-twenties depended, were suddenly cut off.

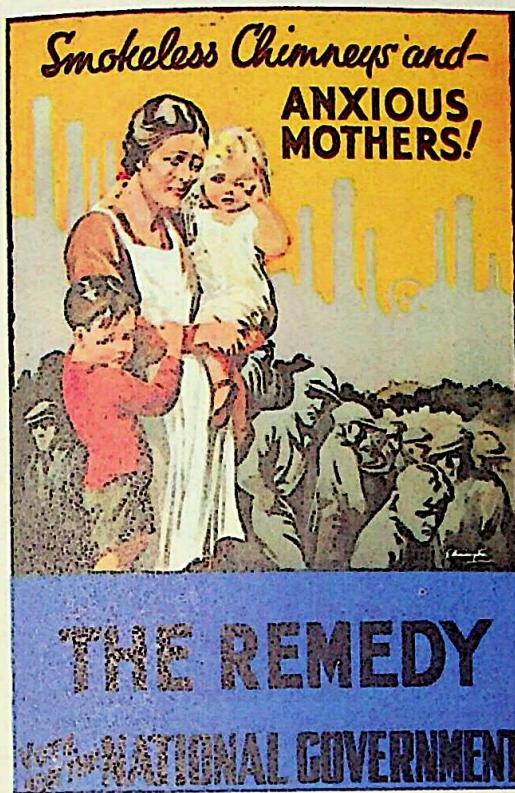
For the first time in its history, Latin America had to face the problem of large-scale unemployment. In Brazil half the civil service was thrown out of work in a matter of months. In Chile 100,000 of the 140,000 miners lost their jobs within two years. The depression years were more violent than any others in Latin America's history since the early years of independence. In the first year of the depression the governments of the three major South American states, Argentina, Brazil, and Chile (the 'ABC states') were all overthrown. In Argentina, none of whose governments had been forcibly overthrown for half a century, General José Uriburu, a professed admirer of Mussolini, established a military dictatorship. Two months later a military coup in Brazil handed power to another admirer of Mussolini, Getulio Vargas, who established what he called 'a disciplined democracy'. Chile, which suffered more severely from the depression than any other Latin American country, dissolved for eighteen months into a condition close to anarchy with, at one time, six governments being overthrown in the space of a hundred days. Of all the states of Latin America, only Colombia and Costa Rica managed to preserve relatively stable government throughout the nineteen-thirties.

Like Uriburu and Vargas, many of the men who came to power during the depression were attracted by the methods used by Mussolini in Italy. A few, like Calles, the Mexican dictator, claimed to model themselves on Hitler. It would be a mistake, however, to draw too close a parallel between the dictatorships of Europe and Latin America. Everywhere in Latin America dictatorship was tempered by incompetence. No government possessed the means to make itself totalitarian, even if it wished to do so. Political programmes, too, frequently contained a bewildering mixture of ideologies which would have been un-

*Below: 'Our government—not only old but deaf': a photographic cartoon by Dr Erich Salomon. The National Government gives its first press conference on 26 August 1931. On the left is the conservative leader, Stanley Baldwin; on the right the prime minister, Ramsay MacDonald.*

*Below right: the massive growth of United States investment in Latin America after the First World War. Until 1914 most foreign investment in Latin America had come from Europe.*

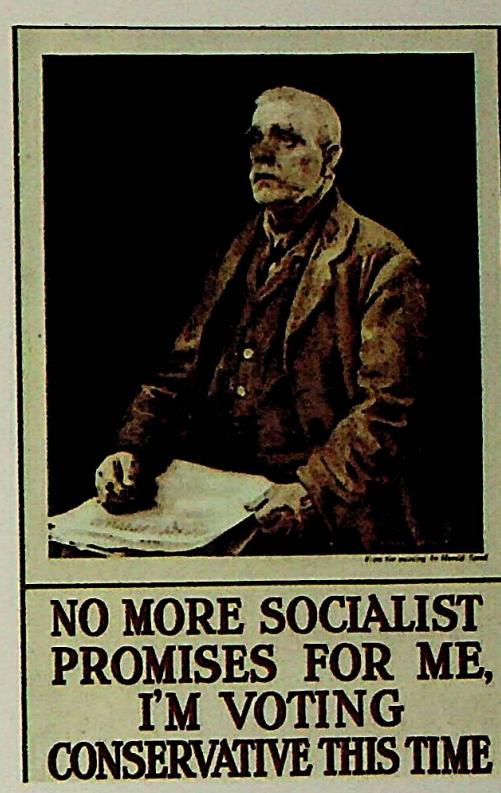




Ramsay MacDonald's National Government appeals for votes at the general election of October 1931. Above: the National Government promises a cure for unemployment.



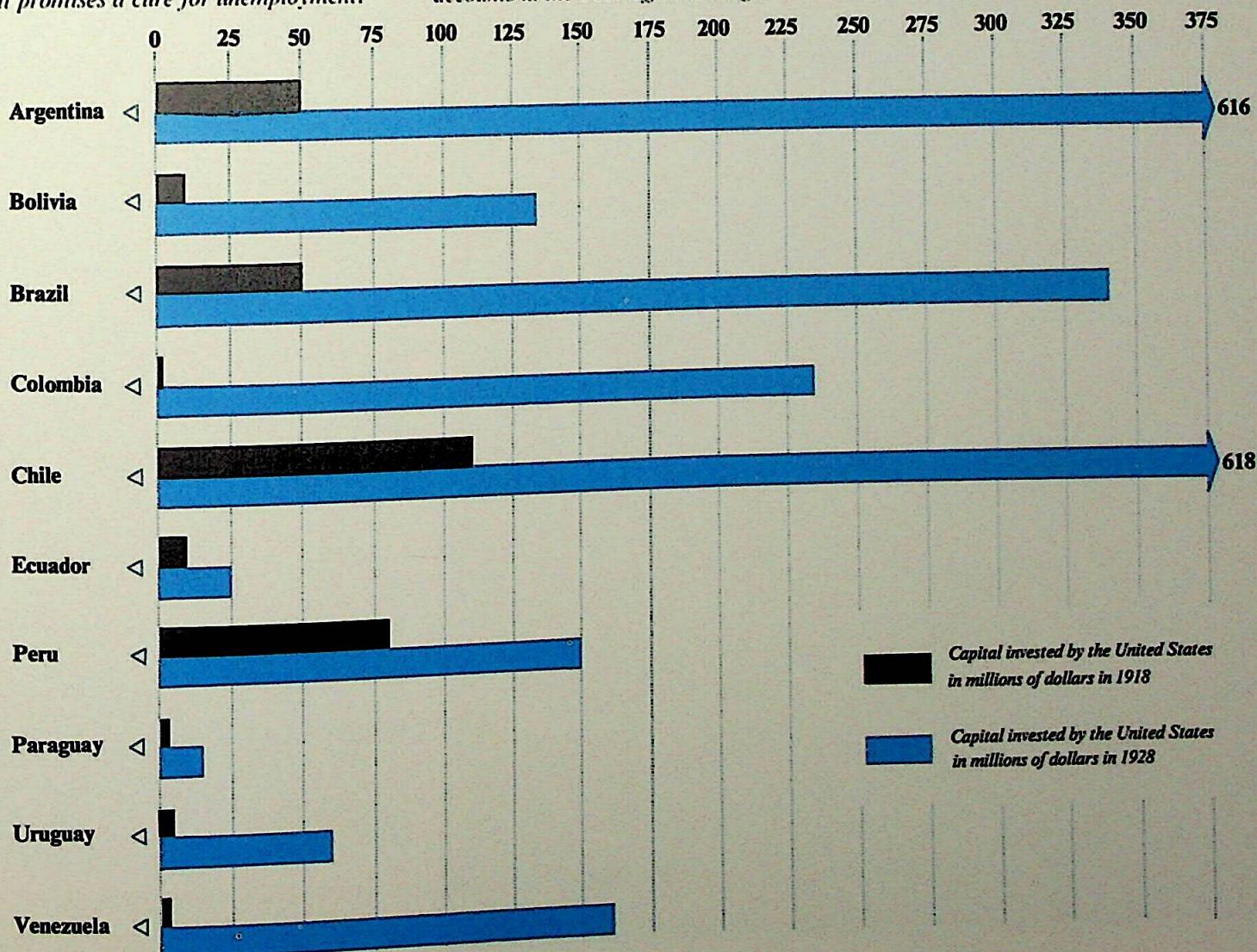
WE MUST THINK OF OUR SAVINGS AND OUR HOME. THAT'S WHY I'M VOTING FOR THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT



NO MORE SOCIALIST PROMISES FOR ME, I'M VOTING CONSERVATIVE THIS TIME

Above: one of the more disreputable National Government posters repeats the insinuation that a labour government would pillage accounts in the Post Office Savings Bank.

Above: a disillusioned socialist voter sees the light. The National Government won the biggest victory in British electoral history; its supporters gained 554 of the 615 seats.



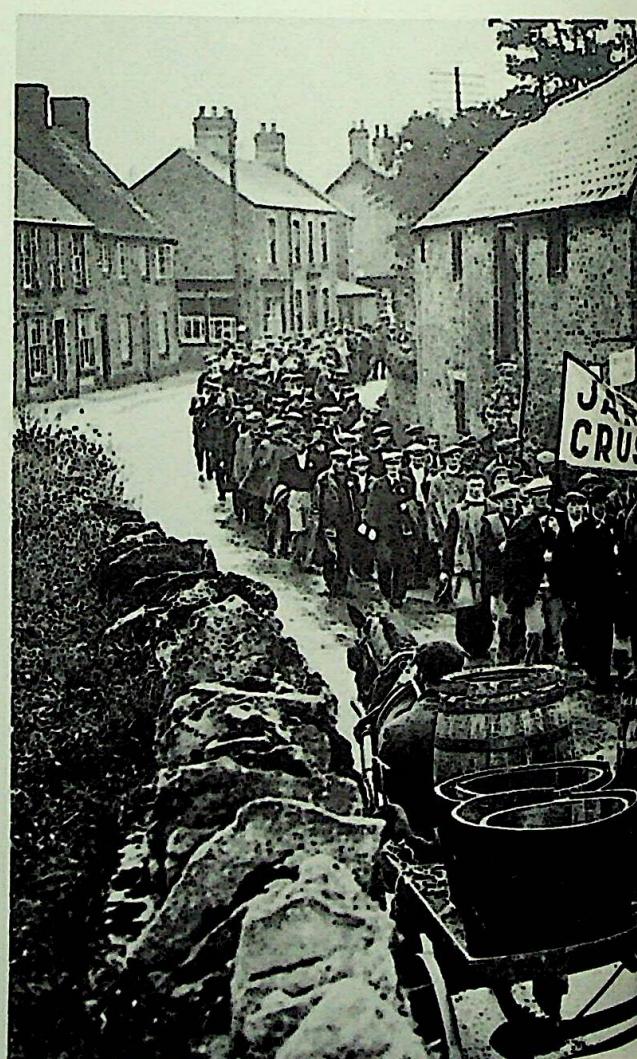
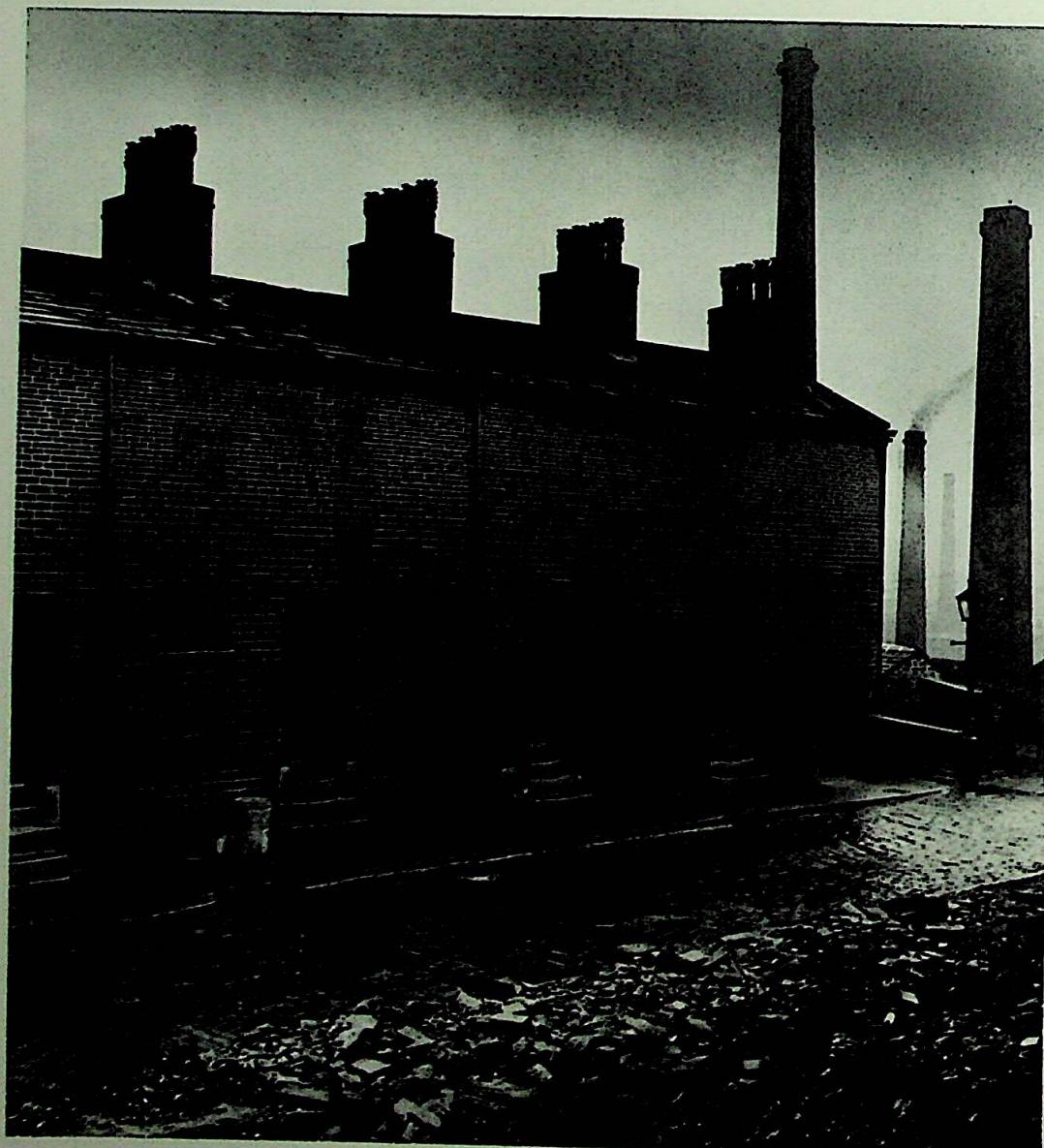


*Left: dictatorship in Latin America: 'Slave' by the Mexican artist José Clemente Orozco. There were more coup d'états and other political upheavals in Latin America during the years of the Great Depression than at any time since the early years of independence more than a century before. (Huntingdon Hartford Collection, New York.)*

*Below centre: the Jarrow Crusade on its way to London in October 1936 to seek help from the government. Jarrow was one of the Northern towns worst hit by the depression. After its shipyard closed down in 1934, over 80 per cent of its labour force was thrown out of work. Jobs began to return only with re-armament and the approach of the Second World War.*

*The depression years in the North of England photographed by Bill Brandt.*

*Below left: Workers' houses in a northern city; they have no windows facing the street. Below right: searching for coal on a slag-heap near Heworth, Tyneside.*



thinkable in Europe. Calles, for example, though an admirer of Hitler, chose a moderate Marxist, Lázaro Cárdenas, to succeed him as president of Mexico in 1934. In 1938 a left-wing Popular Front government was established in Chile with the support of the Chilean Nazi party. The most striking characteristic of the regimes of the nineteen-thirties was their nationalism and xenophobia. Marxists, fascists, and conservatives alike all blamed the outside world for Latin America's ills.

### The depression in Europe

The first international consequence of the European depression was to strengthen France. France was not, like Germany, dependent on American investment, nor, like Britain, did she have to export to live. While the mark and the pound fell, the franc remained firm, supported by one third of the world's gold reserves. Dr Luther, the president of the German Reichsbank, was forced to fly cap in hand to Paris in search of credit, and France was able to make her financial goodwill dependent on German political concessions.

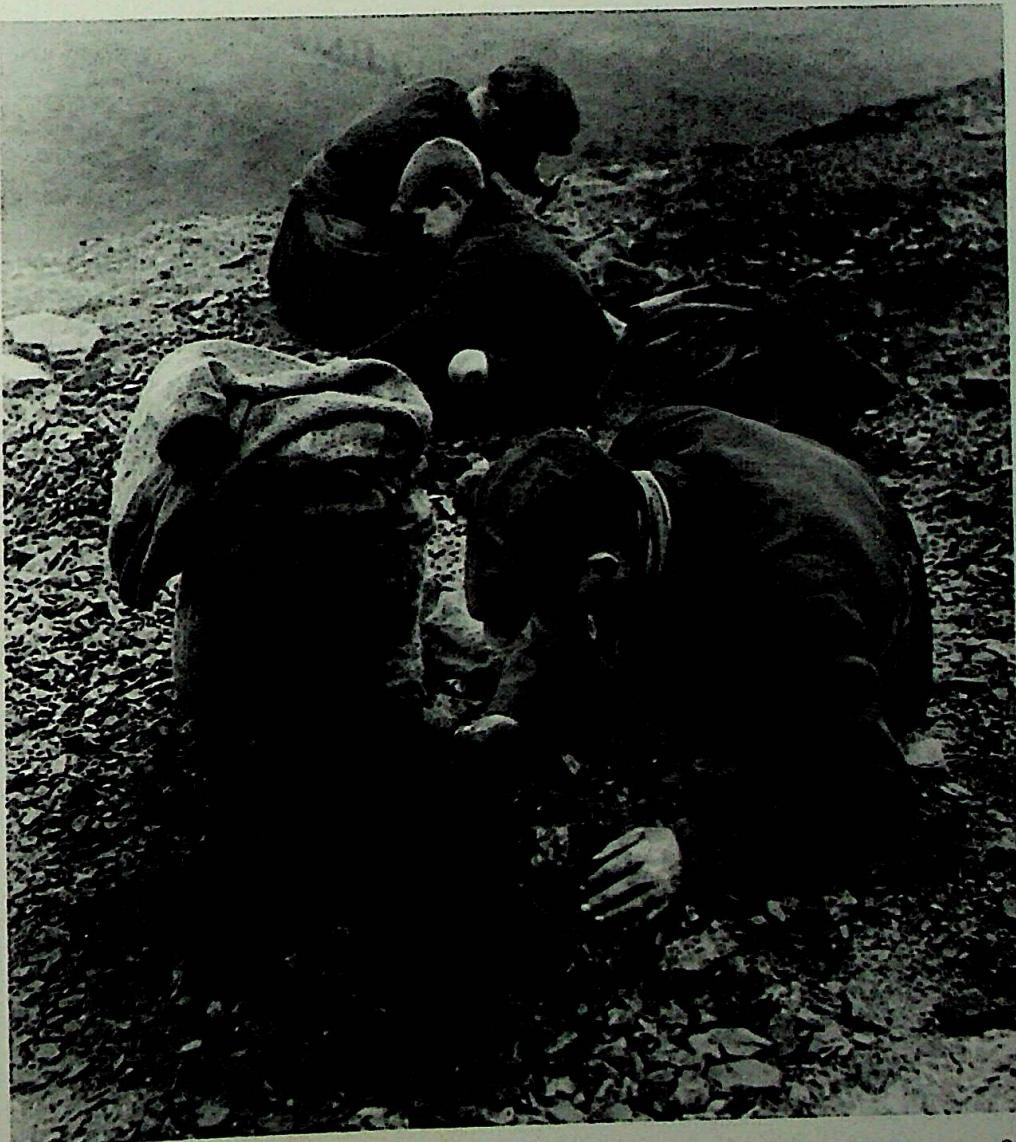
Until 1932 many Frenchmen thought

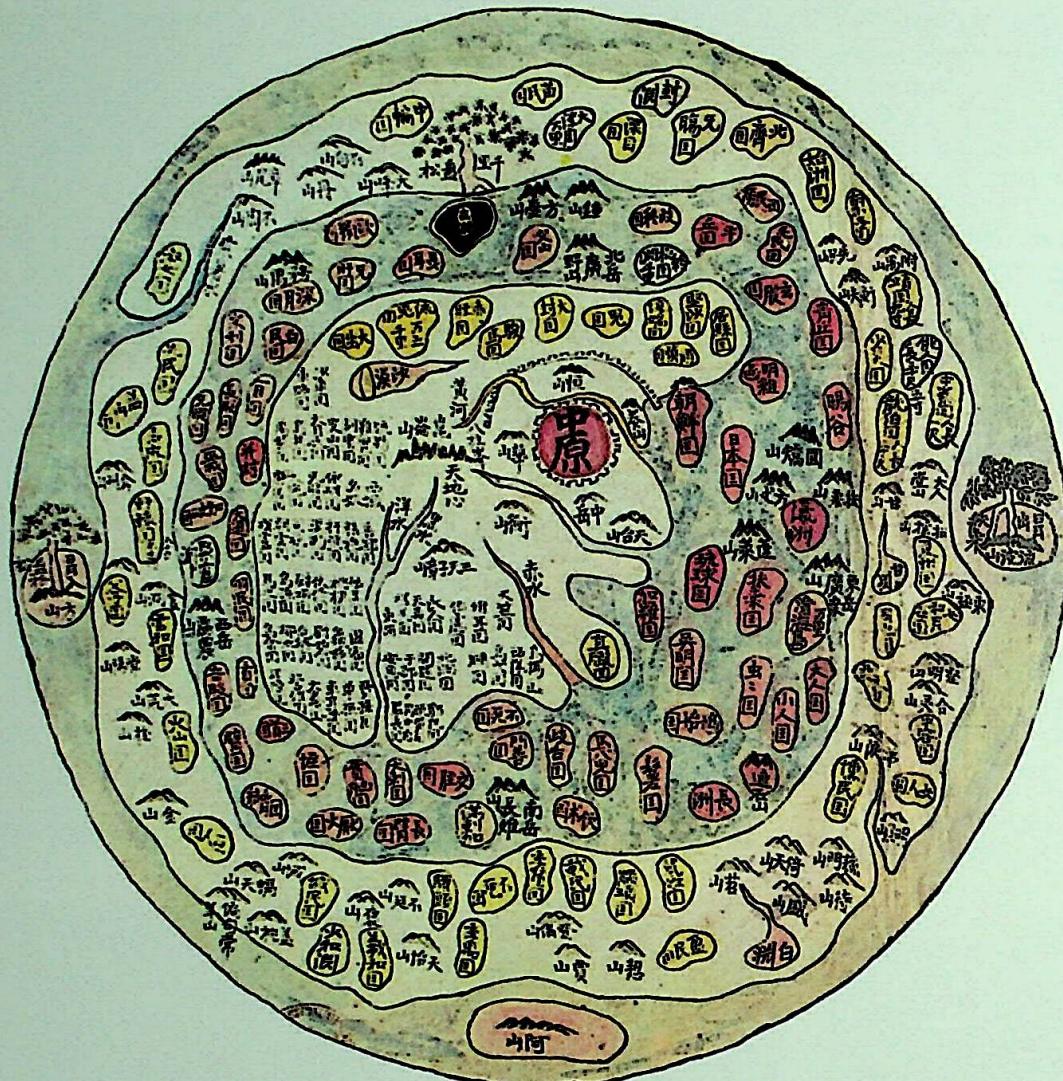
they might escape the depression altogether. 'For our part', said *Le Figaro* in October 1931, 'let us rejoice in our timid yet prosperous economy in contrast to the presumptuous and decadent economy of the Anglo-Saxon races'. This euphoria was short-lived. Though the depression reached France last, it lingered longer there than anywhere else in western Europe. When Germany had recovered from the depression, and was planning its second bid for the mastery of Europe, France was still in the midst of an economic crisis. Even on the eve of the Second World War French industrial production was only three-quarters of the pre-depression level.

For more than half a century Marxists had been predicting the collapse of the European economy. Yet when the collapse came they were not the ones to profit from it. Not a single country became communist as a result of the Great Depression. Instead, the depression changed fascism, communism's most virulent opponent, from an Italian to a European movement. The change in the nature of fascism is aptly reflected in the utterances of its founding father, Benito Mussolini. Having declared

in 1928 that 'Fascism is not an article for export', he changed his mind soon after the depression had begun and declared in 1930, 'I never said that fascism is not an article for export'.

Over much of Europe democracy was still a new and fragile institution, unable to withstand the shock of an economic cataclysm. The greatest tragedy of the European depression was that it struck hardest in Germany, the great power where democracy was weakest. Once democracy had been destroyed in Germany, democracy in the rest of Europe stood at risk.





# China and Japan

*China is exploited by the West and humiliated by Japan; out of the chaos of the warlord era emerge two rivals for the leadership of China, Chiang Kai-shek and Mao Tse-tung; Japan begins its bid for the mastery of Asia.*

'In China there lies a sleeping giant. Let him sleep on, for when he wakes he will shake the world'. (Napoleon)

## China's response to the West

China is the oldest civilised state on earth. It is also the only large country in the world which has never at any time passed under European rule. For two thousand years after its unification in 221 B.C. the Chinese Empire came into contact with no civilisation which was the equal of its own. Isolated by mountain, desert, and ocean from all but its Asian neighbours, China came to consider itself the 'Middle Kingdom', the only centre of civilisation in a world otherwise inhabited by barbarians.

This illusion lingered on into the middle of the nineteenth century. An American

missionary in the eighteen-fifties described the Chinese version of the map of the world:

'It is almost entirely filled up with the 'Middle Kingdom', while a few insignificant islands in the corners are severally called America, England, France, Germany, Russia, Italy, Spain, Africa, and so on. Peking is, in their estimation, the centre of the universe and they have a chart which represents mankind as not only being less and less civilised in proportion to their distance from the capital, but also as actually found lacking or changed in some of the natural features of a human being, taking their own type as standard.'

China was not merely ignorant of the outside world. It was also uninterested in it. The Middle Kingdom found it incon-

*Above: 'All under Heaven': a map of the world produced in nineteenth-century Korea which exemplifies China's traditional view of its own importance. China lies at the centre of the world (note the Yellow River, the Yangtze and the Great Wall of China) surrounded by the other nations of the earth, some real, some mythical. (British Museum, London.)*



*Above: the Dowager Empress Tzu Hsi, 'Holy Mother' of the Chinese Empire; her long nails are a sign that she performed no manual work. 'Do you know', Tzu Hsi once said, 'I have often thought that I am the cleverest woman that ever lived, and that others cannot compare with me. Although I have heard much about Queen Victoria and read a part of her life which someone has translated into Chinese, still I don't think her life was half so interesting and eventful as mine... I have 400 million people all dependent on my will.' For half a century Tzu Hsi was the real ruler of the Chinese Empire. Her death in 1908 began the downfall of the Manchu dynasty.*

ceivable that the barbarians beyond its borders had anything of value to offer. After a British mission to Peking in 1793 had tried to interest the Chinese court in the inventions of western civilisation, the Chinese emperor wrote to George III: 'As your ambassador can see for himself, we possess everything. I set no value on strange or ingenious objects and have no use for your country's manufactures'.

The only western product for which there was any demand in China was opium from the British colony of India. It was China's growing addiction to opium which gave the West its first foothold in the Chinese economy—a foothold from which it refused to be dislodged. When China tried to end the opium trade in 1839 (by now a hundred times greater than a hundred years before), Britain went to war to preserve it.

The first Opium War of 1840-2 (which was followed by a second in the eighteen-fifties) forced China, for the first time, to open its doors to the West. Its wars with the West led to the establishment of 'treaty ports', semi-colonial enclaves on Chinese territory which became the bases for the

European exploitation of the Chinese economy. For a hundred years China itself became a semi-colonial nation. Its tax system, its ports and its largest industrial city, fell into the hands of foreign powers. The Chinese government became, in the words of Mao Tse-tung, 'the counting house of our foreign masters'. The colonial privileges first established by the West in China in 1842 were finally abandoned only in 1943, at a time when much of China was in Japanese hands.

For the first fifty years of its exploitation by Western capital China still remained aloof from Western ideas. Except for a half-hearted attempt to modernise its army, the Chinese government sought refuge in 'a return to old ways'. It was, paradoxically, not Europe but Japan which was responsible for ending China's intellectual isolation from the West. For centuries the Japanese had been contemptuously known in China as the 'dwarf pirates', inferior beings who had copied Chinese civilisation. But in 1895 China was heavily defeated in a war with Japan and lost Formosa. Defeat by the 'dwarf pirates' was the greatest humiliation in the history of the Chinese Empire. Yet the reason for this humiliation seemed obvious. It lay in Japan's determination to learn from the West. The conclusion drawn by most educated Chinese was that China must do the same.

### The emergence of Japan

Japan's response to the challenge of the West was quite different from that of China. Like China, it had preserved itself from contact with the West until this was forced upon it. For two hundred years after the middle of the seventeenth century Japan had lived in almost total seclusion from the outside world. But when its islands were opened to trade with the West in the eighteen-fifties at the point of American guns, Japan was not crippled in its response by the blind belief in its own superiority which had exposed China to humiliation at the hands of Europe.

More than a thousand years before, Japan had proved by its assimilation of Chinese culture its ability to adapt to the outside world. In the mid-eighteenth-century Japan came swiftly to the conclusion that, if it were to avoid the fate of China, it must learn from the West the secrets of its strength.

The speed of Japan's modernisation has no parallel in the history of the modern world. In the eighteen-fifties its islands had been defenceless even against a small detachment of American warships. Half a century later, in 1905, it inflicted a crushing defeat on Russia, which for most of the nineteenth century had been considered the greatest military power on earth. Japan's transformation into a modern state began with the accession of the em-

peror Mutsuhito in 1867. For centuries the emperor had been a mere figurehead, dominated by a noble clan, the Tokugawa, who had been the real rulers of Japan. But in 1867 the Tokugawa were overthrown by reformers who restored the emperor, and used his authority and prestige to gain acceptance for an ambitious programme of reforms.

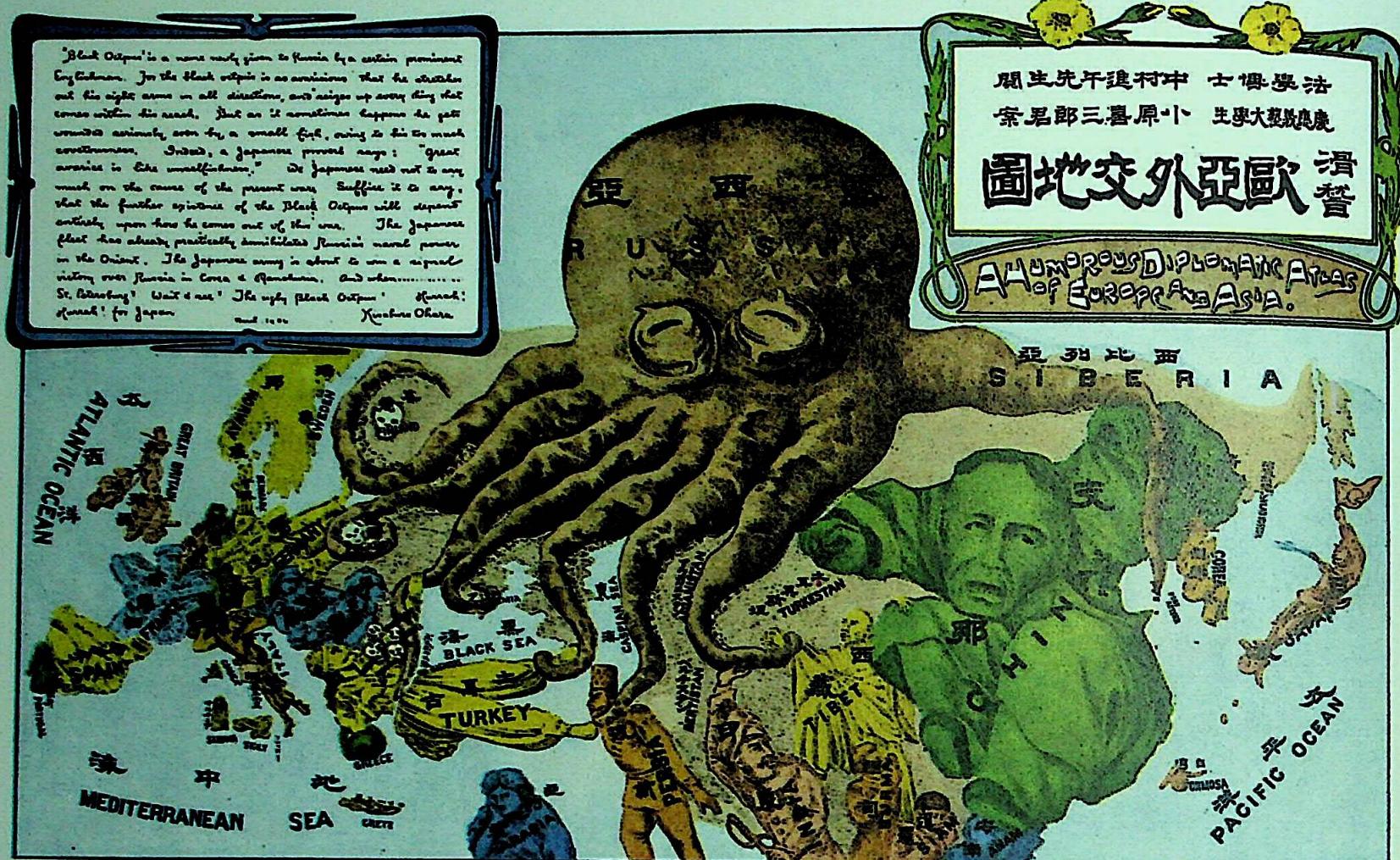
Mutsuhito gave to his reign the name of *Meiji*, or 'enlightened rule'. When he died in 1912 Japan possessed a strong army, a modern navy, and the basis of an industrialised economy. It had conquered Formosa and Korea, and gained the foothold in Manchuria from which in the nineteen-thirties it would begin the conquest of China. Though continuing to insist on his own divinity, Mutsuhito bestowed on Japan an autocratic system of government modelled on Bismarckian Germany, with the additional refinement that the army and navy ministers had always to be drawn from the armed services. This meant, in effect, that Japanese service chiefs had something approaching a power of veto over any cabinet of which they disapproved. The army thus acquired, with disastrous consequences for the future, an influence on government which it possessed in no other country in the world outside Latin America.

### Japan and the First World War

The First World War changed the balance of power in the Far East more than in any other part of the world. In Europe Germany's bid for European hegemony had only been interrupted. In the western hemisphere the war had merely confirmed the existing supremacy of the United States. But in the Far East the war established, for the first and only time in its history, the supremacy of Japan.

Before the First World War Japan had been only one of a number of powers competing among themselves for a privileged position in China. With the outbreak of war, however, Japan's competitors were forced to abandon the struggle for influence in China and concentrate instead on the struggle in Europe. Japan took advantage of the war to capture the German base at Kiaochow on the Chinese mainland and take possession of all the German islands in the north Pacific. Even the United States, hitherto deeply suspicious of Japan's ambitions, formally recognised after its entry into the war that 'Japan has special interests in China'. 'The Far Eastern problem', wrote the British minister in Peking at the end of the war, 'may now be defined as the problem of Japan's position in China'.

Japanese supremacy in the Far East was guaranteed by an international conference called at Washington in 1921 to discuss the limitation of naval armaments. Japan agreed to limit its navy to three-fifths the size of the navies of Britain and the United



States, and to give up Kiaochow, though it still retained the Pacific islands which it had won from Germany. In return for these concessions (which still left it with the third largest navy in the world, and a strong foothold in China) Japan was able to insist that the West construct no naval bases within striking distance of its islands. Britain was to build no naval base north of Singapore, the United States no base west of Hawaii. Japan thus acquired the naval supremacy of the western Pacific.

This supremacy could have been challenged only by naval co-operation between the world's two greatest naval powers, Britain and the United States. Anthony Eden, as British foreign secretary in the years before the Munich crisis, tried several times to reach agreement on Far Eastern policy with the United States. He declared publicly that he was prepared to 'go from Melbourne to Alaska' to secure American co-operation. But the United States refused to commit itself to more than moral condemnation of Japanese aggression. Just as American isolation made possible Hitler's 'New Order' in Europe, so in the Far East it made possible Japan's 'New Order in East Asia'.

Besides transforming Japan's political position, the First World War also made it a fully industrial state for the first time. No country in the world—not even the United

States—derived greater economic advantages from the war. All over Asia Japan was able to capture markets which Europe had once dominated but was now unable to supply because of the demands of the war effort. Part of Lancashire's economic troubles between the wars stemmed from Japan's conquest of much of the Asian cotton textile market during the First World War. Japan was transformed by the war from a debtor to a creditor nation. Until 1914 Japan had always been in deficit on its balance of payments. During the war years alone, it accumulated a trading surplus of 1,400 million yen—a greater sum than the total value of her industrial production in 1913. Its gold reserves in the same period increased almost a hundred times.

The causes of Japan's rise to Asian supremacy during the First World War, however, lie as much in China as in Japan. Throughout history the greatness of one power has invariably been built on the weakness of its neighbours. This principle was as true of twentieth-century Japan as of classical Rome, or the France of Louis XIV, or the Germany of Adolf Hitler. The real basis of Japanese power was less its own strength than the weakness of China. China was twelve times larger than Japan in area (even after the acquisitions of the Meiji era), eight times larger in the size of

Above: a Japanese propaganda leaflet distributed in England during the Russo-Japanese War. Japan's victory was popular not only in England, who was then its ally, but also—more surprisingly—among the Chinese nationalists, despite China's humiliation by Japan only ten years before.

its population, and richer by far in its natural resources. In the long term the modernisation of China, begun at the turn of the twentieth century, was bound to make it, once again, the greatest power in Asia. In the short term, however, it destroyed China's internal cohesion. It was the interval of chaos in China which accompanied its emergence as a modern state, which allowed Japan to make its bid for the mastery of Asia.

### The age of the warlords in China

Each of the dynasties which had ruled China for the past two thousand years had claimed to derive its throne from 'the Mandate of Heaven'. Each time a dynasty was overthrown its demise was interpreted by the Chinese people as a sign that heaven had withdrawn its mandate. Thus it was with the fall of the Manchus in 1911. But with their fall the traditional dynastic



Above: a street execution in China during the nineteen-twenties—one of many thousands during the Warlord era. Methods of execution differed. Feng Yu-hsiang, the 'Christian marshal', was alleged to strangle his prisoners with his bare hands.

pattern of Chinese history was broken. They were succeeded not by a new dynasty but by a republic inspired by the alien ideals of western liberal democracy. 'History', said *The Times*, 'has witnessed few such surprising revolutions'. But *The Times* was less than optimistic for the future. It declared:

'Some of those who know China best cannot but doubt whether a form of government so utterly alien to Oriental traditions as a Republic can be suddenly substituted for a monarchy in a nation of 400 millions of men whom Kings with semi-divine attributes have ruled since the first dim twilight of history.'

The aim of the republican nationalists in the 1911 revolution was to replace the decentralised autocracy of the Manchu Empire with a strong and centralised Chinese state. In the short term, however, they achieved precisely the opposite. The new republic could not unite China because it could not control the army. Of the thirty-six divisions in the Manchu army in 1911, only five were paid and controlled directly by Peking. The other thirty-one were financed by the provinces in which they were stationed. The provincial commanders—'warlords' as they were romantically called by the Western press—looked on the fall of the Manchus as an opportunity

to entrench themselves as feudal rulers of their respective provinces. Not until Mao Tse-tung proclaimed the Chinese People's Republic in 1949 was any government able to end the rule of the warlords.

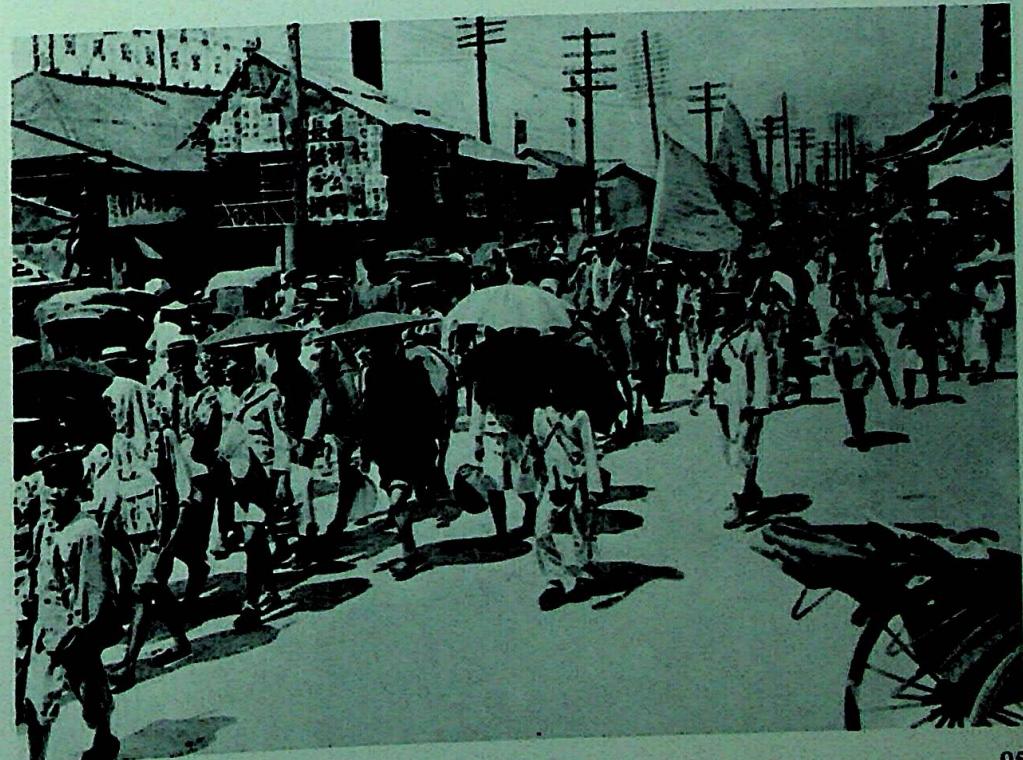
The Chinese Republic was officially proclaimed on 1 January 1912. Six weeks later in order to prevent civil war its first president, Sun Yat-sen, was forced to hand over power to Yuan Shih-k'ai, the former commander of the Manchu army. Yuan was optimistically referred to by republican politicians as the 'Washington of the Chinese Republic'. His aim, however, was not to defend the Republic but to destroy it. On New Year's Day 1916 he proclaimed himself the founder of a new imperial dynasty. Yuan died six months later whilst trying, without success, to quell the rebellions which his proclamation had brought about.

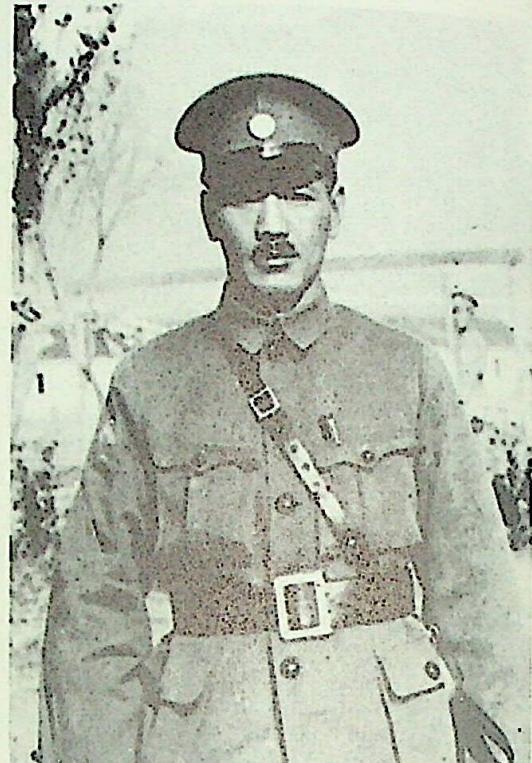
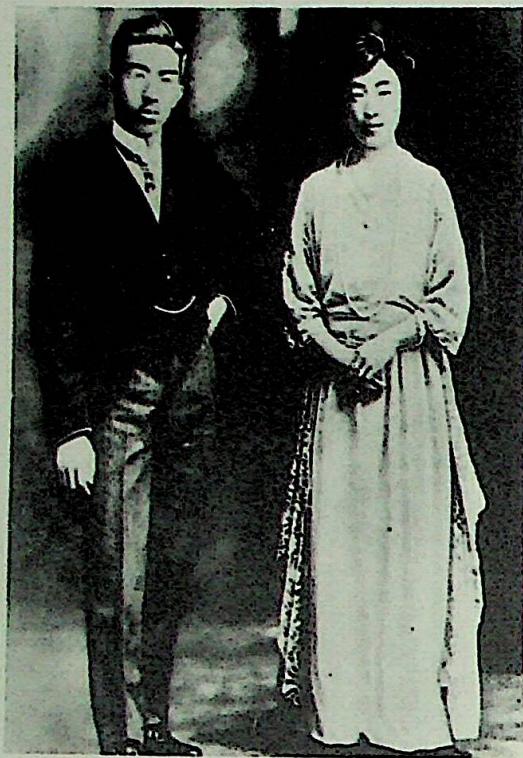
The twelve years after Yuan's death were the most chaotic in Chinese history since the peasant rebellions which had brought down the Ming dynasty in the middle of the seventeenth century (at almost the same moment when the Stuart dynasty was being overthrown in England). In 1917 Sun Yat-sen and his republican followers left Peking and set up their own government in Canton. At the Paris peace conference two years later China was in the remarkable position of being jointly represented by separate delegations from the rival regimes

Below left: Chinese civil servants remove their pigtails during the 1911 revolution. The Chinese people had for centuries been forced to wear pigtails as a sign of their subjection to their Manchu rulers. Mao Tse-Tung later recalled that his first revolutionary act

was to cut the pigtails off six of his school-friends who lacked the courage to do so themselves.

Below: a warlord army on the march in 1923. Its disordered column typifies the more general chaos of the warlord era.





*The two faces of Japan during the nineteen-twenties. The Emperor Hirohito (above) with his wife in Western dress, and (above centre) in traditional court robes.*

*Above right: Chiang Kai-shek. Though his régime inherited the idealism of Sun Yat-sen, it became increasingly corrupt. General Stilwell, the senior American commander in China, wrote in 1943: 'Peanut (Stilwell's nickname for Chiang) is really no dictator. He issues an order. Everybody bows and says "sure". But nobody does anything. He knows all about the smuggling and rottenness, but he hasn't the power to cure it'.*

in Peking and Canton, each claiming to be the only legitimate Chinese government and each conducting a civil war against the other. Neither government, however, controlled more than a fraction of the Chinese provinces, and both were at the mercy of the local warlords. Sun was forced on several occasions to flee for refuge to one of the foreign enclaves on Chinese soil.

Until the Japanese invasion of 1937 the real rulers of most of China were the warlords. Some made genuine, though sometimes misguided, attempts to modernise their provinces. One of the most famous, Feng Yu-hsiang, the 'Christian marshal', ordered the mass baptism of his troops with fire hoses and mounted his cavalry for a time on bicycles. Many warlords, however, were simply content to feather their own nests. Conscious that their reigns were likely to be brief, they were anxious to extract as much as possible from the population of their provinces before they could be deposed by a rival. No warlord after Yuan had any hope of founding even a local dynasty. Having amassed their for-

tunes, many then retired to the security of one of the 'treaty ports'. Tientsin, in particular, became a kind of Bournemouth for retired warlords. By 1926 it contained twenty-five major, and many minor, warlords living in retirement.

#### *'No sun rises for China in the West'*

The consequences of the First World War in China were less dramatic than in Japan. In the long run, however, they were of even greater importance. The war produced a massive disillusionment among educated Chinese with the alien ideals which had inspired the foundation of the Chinese Republic. China's reaction against the West, like its earlier interest in western ideas, was once again the result of its humiliation by Japan. Japan took advantage of the war to deliver to Yuan Shih-k'ai in 1915 the notorious Twenty-one Demands, which were intended to turn China into a virtual Japanese protectorate. Japan tried to keep these demands secret for fear of their effect on the outside world. Precisely for that reason China made sure that knowledge of them reached Europe and the United States. Though the pressure of world opinion forced Japan to modify its more extreme demands, China was forced to concede to Japan both Kiaochow and the various privileges formerly enjoyed by Germany, and to agree to an extension of Japan's existing foothold in Manchuria. The day on which Yuan agreed to these concessions became known in China as National Humiliation Day.

In August 1917 the Peking government yielded to American pressure to enter the war on the Allied side. By so doing, said the United States, China would win a place at the peace conference from which it could

challenge Japan's encroachment on its soil. China's delegations set out for Paris at the end of the war confident that the principle of self-determination which the Allies had proclaimed in Europe would also be applied in China. What China did not know was that Britain and France were already committed by secret treaties to supporting Japan. The treaty of Versailles brushed aside all China's claims, and formally recognised the transfer to Japan of the former German base at Kiaochow. The American minister in Peking wrote: 'Probably nowhere else in the world had expectations of America's leadership at Paris been raised so high as in China. The Chinese trusted America, they trusted the frequent declarations of principle uttered by President Wilson, whose words had reached China in its remotest parts. The more intense was their disappointment and disillusionment due to the decisions of the old men controlling the Peace Conference. It sickened and disheartened me to think how the Chinese people would receive this blow which meant the blasting of their hopes and the destruction of their confidence in the equity of nations.'

China's treatment by its allies made Chinese nationalism a mass movement for the first time. Its leaders were the Chinese students. On 4 May 1919 demonstrators taking part in a protest rally against the Paris peace conference organised by students from Peking university burned down the house of Ts'ao Ju-lin, who had negotiated the Chinese reply to the Twenty-one Demands, and beat up Chang Tsung-hsiang, the former Chinese minister in Tokyo, whose life was saved only by the arrival of troops. The Fourth of May Movement, as



it became known, spread to two hundred towns and cities throughout China, involving twenty million people in a series of strikes and demonstrations and a boycott of Japanese goods.

In response to pressure from the movement, the Chinese delegation at the Paris peace conference refused to sign the Versailles treaty (which thus did not receive the signature of any one of the world's three largest independent nations—China, Russia, and the United States). One of the leaders of the movement in Hunan was the young Mao Tse-tung, not yet a Marxist but already an ardent nationalist. His article, *The great union of the popular masses of the whole country*, written in July 1919, was widely read as far afield as Peking. In it Mao declared:

'We students are already living in the twentieth century, and yet they [China's rulers] still compel us to observe the old ceremonies and the old methods. The country is about to perish, and yet they put up posters forbidding us to love our country.... The great union of the Chinese people must be achieved. Gentlemen! We must all exert ourselves, we must all advance with the utmost strength. Our golden age, our age of brilliance and splendour, lies ahead!'

Western observers were taken aback by the student leadership of the Fourth of May Movement. The American philosopher, John Dewey, who came to lecture in Peking in 1919, wrote back to America: 'To think of kids in our country from fourteen on taking the lead in starting a big clean-up reform politics movement and shaming merchants and professional men into joining them! This is sure some country!'

In Europe student protest had begun to emerge as a political force only in the nineteenth century and even then on a small scale. But in China student protest was as old as the Empire itself. During the first century B.C. 30,000 students from the Imperial College had joined in an organised protest against the dismissal of an imperial official. At a number of times of crisis during the next two millenia, students at schools and colleges claimed the right to act as spokesmen for Chinese public opinion. The publications of the Fourth of May Movement make it clear that Chinese students in 1919 saw themselves in this traditional role.

Just as Soviet historians attribute the success of the March Revolution in Russia to the leadership of the Bolshevik party, so the few remaining historians on the Chinese mainland now claim to discern in the Fourth of May Movement the leadership of the Chinese Communist party—a remarkable achievement for a party which was not founded until two years later. The events of 4 May 1919 do, none the less, mark a turning-point in China's relations with the West, and the beginning of a new sympathy for Soviet Russia.

Until the First World War, Chinese intellectuals, though not entirely ignorant of Marxism, had been uninterested in it. Even Ch'en Tu-hsin, who in 1921 was to become the first leader of the Chinese communist party, had looked for the salvation of China not to ideas of Marx and Lenin but to 'Mr Democracy' and 'Mr Science', whom he considered the personifications of Western civilisation. China's betrayal at Versailles, however, left Ch'en, like most other Chinese intellectuals, disillusioned not merely with western governments but with western ideas

*Above left: a Japanese girl tries a rifle at an army open day in Japan during the nineteen-twenties. Militarism in Japan seemed to be on the decline.*

*Above: Manchuria, 1931. A Chinese soldier captured by the Japanese: around his neck is the belt of machine-gun bullets with which he will be shot.*

as well. 'No sun', it was said, 'rises for China in the West.'

**'Russia joins the East and leaves the West'**

Less than a month after the treaty of Versailles, Bolshevik Russia offered to renounce all the 'unequal treaties' imposed on China by the tsars and return all the territory taken from it. The contrast between Russia's behaviour towards China and that of the Western imperialists could hardly have seemed more striking. Sun Yat-sen, formerly an ardent admirer of the American system of government, now looked for inspiration not to Wilson but to Lenin. 'The only allies and brothers of the Chinese people in the struggle for national freedom', said Sun in a manifesto of July 1919, 'are the Russian workers and peasants of the Red Army.'

To most Chinese intellectuals the Russian revolution seemed to have changed Russia from a European to an Asian nation which had left the ranks of imperialist powers to side with the peoples of Asia in their struggle for freedom from foreign exploitation. 'Russia', said Sun, 'is attempting to separate from the white peoples of Europe.... She joins the East and leaves the West.'

Sun Yat-sen and the republicans at Canton (now renamed the Kuomintang or

Nationalist party) were ignored by the Western powers, most of which hoped vaguely for the emergence of a warlord strong enough to bring the whole country under his control. Only the Russian communists offered Sun and his followers their sympathy and support. In January 1922 Kuomintang delegates attended in Moscow a 'Congress of Toilers of the Far East'. In the following autumn one of the ablest Russian diplomats, Adolf Joffe, arrived in China to negotiate an alliance with Sun. By the terms of this alliance both men agreed that 'Communism was not suited to Chinese conditions' (Joffe doubtless adding 'not yet' under his breath).

The Kuomintang was promised Russian arms, money, and political and military advisers. The political advisers, inspired by the principles of 'democratic centralism', made the Kuomintang an efficient political organisation for the first time. The military advisers established the Whampoa military academy which, within a few years, had given the Canton government (previously at the mercy of the local warlords) the most powerful army in China. The first commandant of the new academy was the young and ambitious Nationalist general, Chiang Kai-shek.

The alliance with Russia brought with it the support of the still infant Chinese communist party. For several years, a number of communists held important posts in the Kuomintang administration. Mao Tse-tung ran the propaganda department of the Kuomintang Central Committee. Chou En-lai, later the first prime minister of the Chinese People's Republic, became chief political adviser at the Whampoa military academy. On his deathbed in 1925 Sun wrote a last letter to the Central Committee of the Russian communist party in which he looked forward to the alliance of 'a free and strong China' with the Soviet Union 'in the great fight for the emancipation of the oppressed peoples of the whole world'. In communist China today Sun's portraits are hung alongside those of Marx and Lenin. The places of his birth and burial have become centres of pilgrimage for the communist faithful.

### Chiang Kai-shek

Before his death Sun Yat-sen had dreamed of the day when the armies of the Kuomintang would sweep northwards from Canton and bring the whole of China under nationalist control. In July 1926 the Northern Expedition, commanded by General Chiang Kai-shek, set out from Canton to turn Sun's dreams into reality. Less than two years later, in June 1928, Chiang's forces entered the rival capital of Peking. In the following month he led his generals to the monastery of the Green Cloud, where for three years Sun's body had lain awaiting burial in a glass-topped coffin presented by the Russian government. In Sun's presence

Chiang solemnly declared that the unity of China had been restored. That unity, however, was no more than nominal. Though Chiang had won the support of many of the warlords, he had not brought them under his control. The Nationalist government was never able to free itself from dependence on them.

Chiang was no friend of the West, but he had no faith either in the friendship of Soviet Russia. He returned from a visit to Moscow in 1923, privately convinced that 'What the Russians call "Internationalism" and "World Revolution" are nothing but old-fashioned imperialism'. Publicly Chiang proclaimed:

'If Russia aids the Chinese revolution, does that mean she wants to oblige China to apply communism? No, she wants us to carry out the national revolution. If the communists join the Kuomintang, does this mean that they want to apply communism? No, they do not want to do that either.'

Privately he believed the opposite. The Russians, though suspicious of Chiang's intentions, believed that Chinese communists should co-operate with him until they were strong enough to overthrow him. Chiang, said Stalin, 'should be squeezed like a lemon and then thrown away'.

Chiang, however, sought to use the Northern Expedition not merely to unify China, but to destroy Chinese communism. In April 1927 a communist-led rising delivered Shanghai into his hands. Having gained control of Shanghai, Chiang then began the systematic massacre of the communists who had captured it for him. The 'purification movement', as the attempted extermination of the Chinese communist party was euphemistically described, spread quickly to other parts of China controlled by the Kuomintang and sympathetic warlords and continued for a year. The communists, on Stalin's instructions, replied with a series of armed risings—the Nanchang rising in August among units of the Nationalist army, the 'Autumn Harvest Rising' led by Mao Tse-tung in Hunan, and the Canton Commune in December. All were disastrous failures.

In the late nineteen-sixties the leadership of Communist China consisted largely of men who by various means had survived the disasters of 1927. Mao himself was captured and almost executed, but succeeded in escaping from his guards and hiding in a field of long grass. 'Once or twice', Mao said later, 'they came so close I could almost have touched them, but somehow I escaped discovery. At last when it was dusk they abandoned the search.' Chou En-lai had an even more fortunate escape. The officer in charge of his execution squad turned out to be one of Chou's former pupils at Whampoa and set him free.

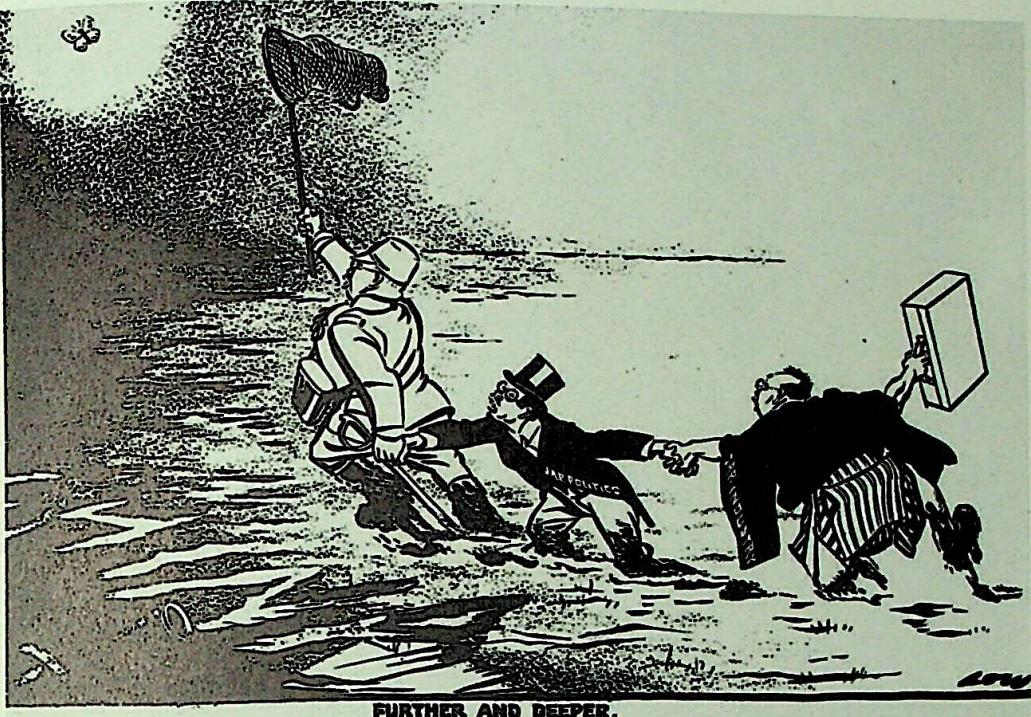
### Japan's bid for Asian mastery

Many Western observers in the nineteen-twenties thought of Japan as the 'Britain of the Far East'. Japan seemed rapidly to be establishing itself as Asia's only stable parliamentary democracy. In 1925, only seven years later than in Britain, all Japanese men gained the vote (though, as in France, women had to wait until after the Second World War). When Hirohito became emperor in the following year, he gave his reign the symbolic name of *showa* or 'enlightened peace'. At the time it seemed an appropriate title. The Japanese government, if not the Japanese army, appeared to have abandoned its wartime ambition of turning the Chinese Republic into a Japanese protectorate. 'Japan', said its foreign minister, Shidehara, 'has no intention of interfering in China's internal affairs.'

The most hopeful sign, both for the peace of Asia and the future of Japanese democracy, was the declining influence in the nineteen-twenties of the Japanese armed forces. The army suffered a severe blow to its prestige from its intervention in the Russian Civil War. In 1918, encouraged by its Western allies, Japan had sent an expedition to Siberia which remained until 1922, long after all other foreign troops had

*Below: Kuomintang poster urging civilians and soldiers to defend China together. (Society for Anglo-Chinese understanding.)*





Left: 'Further and Deeper': a comment on the growing military control of Japanese policy in China during the nineteen-thirties.

been withdrawn from Russia. The contrast between the long drawn-out failure of intervention against the Bolsheviks and the swift and crushing victory of 1905 could hardly fail to impress Japanese opinion.

In 1924 the army, despite the protests of its high command, was forced to cut its strength by four divisions. For the remainder of the nineteen-twenties it was refused the funds it needed to supply itself with up-to-date tanks and aircraft. The government was equally firm with the navy. It agreed at the London Naval Conference in 1930 to curtail its naval building programme, despite the resignation of the naval chief of staff. At the end of the nineteen-twenties there seemed less reason to suppose that the military would soon capture control of Japanese foreign policy than at any time since the dawn of the Meiji era.

The weaknesses of Japanese democracy derived mainly from its newness. The Japanese parliament still showed little of the decorum which the Japanese people considered so important to their way of life. Debates often ended in fist fights between the two main parties, the Seiyukai and the Kenseikai. On one occasion the Seiyukai even arranged for a poisonous snake to be thrown among its opponents from the public gallery, but the plan misfired and the snake landed on the Seiyukai's own benches.

Both parties, too, received regular bribes from rival groups within the *Zaibatsu*, the huge industrial and financial combines which dominated the Japanese economy. The inadequacies of Japanese democracy were tolerated as long as economic prosperity continued. But by destroying Japanese prosperity the Great Depression also destroyed the shallow roots of Japanese parliamentary government.

Within a year of the Wall Street crash

the world price of silk, which accounted for two-fifths of Japanese exports, had fallen by a half. Silk production provided a secondary source of income for almost half the farmers in Japan. Without it many were unable to make ends meet. Unrest in the countryside spread swiftly to the army. Until the Meiji era all Japanese army officers had been *samurai*, members of the old warrior aristocracy. By the nineteen-twenties, however, most officers, like the men they led, were the sons of peasants. The army's chief recruiting grounds in Japan were, significantly, also the areas worst hit by the depression. For most of the Japanese army the only answer to the problems created by the depression was strong government at home and expansion abroad. The depression created a climate of opinion in which the army was able to end its subjection to the politicians and win for its ambitions the support of the majority of the Japanese people.

#### The Manchurian incident

On 18 September 1931 Japanese troops stationed near the Japanese-owned South Manchurian railway blew up a section of the line. They then accused Chinese troops of responsibility for the explosion and used this as an excuse to begin the occupation of Manchuria. The Japanese government had been warned beforehand of the intentions of its army. On 15 September it had despatched an envoy to the Japanese commander in Manchuria with strict instructions to prevent any clash with Chinese troops. The envoy, however, was waylaid by army officers and persuaded to break his journey in an officers' brothel. By the time he emerged to deliver his letter, the Manchurian incident had already taken place.

Control of Japanese foreign policy now

passed abruptly from the politicians to the soldiers. On 30 September 1931 the Japanese government accepted a resolution by the Council of the League of Nations calling for the withdrawal of Japanese troops to the South Manchuria railway zone. But in the face of the nationalist fervour which swept Japan, the government was powerless to carry out its promise. The army simply proceeded with the conquest of Manchuria. Early in 1932 it established in Manchuria the puppet state of Manchukuo, under the nominal rule of the last of the Manchu emperors.

For the next five years the Japanese army followed a policy of creeping imperialism by armed aggression and political intrigue in northern China. Western injunctions to Japan not to interfere in China were, said the minister of war, General Araki Sadao, in 1936, 'like telling a man not to get involved with a woman who was already pregnant by him'. When open war was declared between Japan and China in 1937, the Japanese army had already established indirect control over much of north-east China.

The Manchurian incident was to mark a turning-point in the history of the world between the wars. Eight days before it happened Lord Robert Cecil, the British delegate in Geneva, told the League of Nations: 'There has scarcely been a period in the world's history when war seemed less likely than it does at present.' For a year after war had started in Manchuria, most Western statesmen tried to persuade themselves that nothing had changed. Walter Lippmann, the most famous American journalist of his generation, insisted that 'the Japanese army is, in a word, carrying on not "a war" but "an intervention" which in no way contravened the Briand-Kellogg pact. The establishment of Manchukuo,



*Left: part of Mao's base in the treeless 'loess country' of Yenan in the province of Shensi. Like most of the local peasants Mao and his followers lived in caves hollowed out of the mountainside.*

*Above: Mao (with cigarette) surveys the route ahead during the Long March. Mao wrote later: 'For twelve months we were under daily reconnaissance and bombing from the air by scores of planes; we were encircled, pursued, obstructed, and inter-*

*cepted on the ground by a force of several hundred thousand men; we encountered untold difficulties and great obstacles on the way, but by keeping our two feet going we swept across a distance of more than 6,000 miles through the length and breadth of eleven provinces. In the whole of history has there ever been a march like ours? No, never!' (Society for Anglo-Chinese Understanding.)*

*The Times* assured its readers, 'is undoubtedly intended to provide Manchuria with an efficient government and an honest financial administration.'

In October 1932 the illusion ended. The report of the League's commission of enquiry, though phrased in the most tactful language, condemned Japan. The Japanese delegate at Geneva compared his country to Jesus Christ; Japan, he claimed, was being 'crucified for her opinions'. Early in 1933 Japan left the League in protest. For the first time in its history, a great power had defied the authority of the League of Nations. Others were soon to follow Japan's example.

The Manchurian incident was a characteristic episode in the history of military imperialism. Throughout the period of the expansion of Europe, governments had tended to lose control of their colonial armies. At the dawn of European imperial-

ism, in the sixteenth century, the government of Spain had lost control of its *conquistadors* in the New World. During the final phase of European imperialism, four centuries later, the government of France was overthrown by the rebellion of its armies in Algeria. Like many of the provincial armies in the later Roman Empire, the Japanese army in Manchuria possessed political as well as imperial ambitions. Not content with carving out an empire of its own, it set out to destroy parliamentary democracy in Japan itself.

In May 1932, a group of young army and navy officers assassinated the prime minister, Inukai Tsuyoshi, after forcing their way into his official residence. The military high command, while disclaiming responsibility for the assassination, announced that it would no longer tolerate any government headed by a party leader. But the army did not in fact establish a military dictatorship





Above: China and Japan in 1937. Until the Japanese penetration of China in the nineteen-thirties few Western statesmen had more than a vague idea of the geography of the Far East. During a visit to the Foreign Office in 1926 Stanley Baldwin was heard to remark on observing a map of China: 'So Canton is down there! I always thought it was up there!'—pointing to the general area of Peking, more than a thousand miles further north. It was as if he had supposed Chicago to be in the general area of New York.

until the Second World War. It failed to do so largely because for several years the army itself was torn between two rival factions: the Kodo-ha, which wanted war with Soviet Russia and something resembling a National-Socialist Japan, and the less radical and less adventurous Tosei-ha, whose ambitions were centred on China.

Their rivalry came to a head in February 1936 with an attempted *coup d'état* by the Kodo-ha and the victory of the Tosei-ha.

Henceforth, the victorious Tosei-ha demanded the power to nominate, as well as veto, ministerial appointments. From now on major policy decisions were made, not by the Japanese cabinet but in meetings between the prime minister, the foreign minister and the service ministers and chiefs of staff.

Japan was never, in the European sense, a fascist state. It acquired neither a Führer nor a monolithic party system. But it shared with Nazi Germany (with whom Japan signed an alliance in 1936) both a violently aggressive nationalism and a conviction that parliamentary democracy was incompatible with national greatness. The argument used by Japan to justify its expansion on the Asia mainland was the same as that used by Germany in Europe: the need for *Lebensraum* or 'living space'. Without expansion, its rulers argued, the Japanese islands would soon find it impossible to support their teeming population. The extraordinary expansion of the Japanese (like the German) economy after the Second

World War is a sufficient demonstration of the falsehood of their argument.

### The rise of Mao Tse-tung

After the defeat of his Autumn Harvest Rising in 1927, Mao Tse-tung was forced to take to the hills with what remained of his followers. In 1928 he was joined by Chu Teh, who had led the army rising in Nanchang. Together the two men, soon collectively known as Chu-Mao, succeeded in establishing an independent communist soviet in the province of Kiangsi, protected by a Red Army commanded by Chu, and with Mao as its political commissar.

'Whoever wins the peasants will win China'

In Kiangsi Mao began to evolve a new strategy of revolution. Hitherto, the object of all communist risings both in Europe and China (Mao's included) had been to capture the cities. This was the only strategy which Moscow understood. Once the cities



*Left: Mao in his Shensi base. Edgar Snow, perhaps the Westerner who knew Mao best, wrote of him in 1937: 'I think my first impression—dominantly one of native shrewdness—was probably correct. And yet Mao is an accomplished scholar of Classical Chinese, an omnivorous reader, a deep student of philosophy and history, a good speaker, a man with an unusual memory and extraordinary powers of concentration, an able writer, careless in his personal habits and appearance but astonishingly meticulous about details of duty, a man of tireless energy, and a military and political strategist'*

*of considerable genius. It is an interesting fact that many Japanese regard him as the ablest Chinese strategist alive . . . . Below: the beginning of the Sino-Japanese war: a nationalist poster of 1938 shows well-supplied Chinese troops advancing with artillery and air support to meet the Japanese. The reality was very different. Chiang Kai-shek was quick to realise that his only chance of victory was for the war in China to become part of a broader struggle in the Pacific between Japan and the United States. (Society for Anglo-Chinese Understanding.)*



had been taken, said Stalin, control of the countryside would automatically follow. Mao, however, reversed this strategy. He believed first in gaining control of the countryside by organising the Chinese peasants into rural soviets, and then in 'encircling the cities from the countryside'. The enemy, said Mao, would be defeated not by pitched battles or town risings but by guerrilla warfare waged in the countryside. He summed up his strategy of warfare in four famous sentences:

'When the enemy advances, we retreat.  
When he camps, we harass  
When he tires, we attack  
When he retreats, we pursue.'

Mao spread revolution in the countryside by giving the peasants the land, often lynching landlords and moneylenders in the process. 'Whoever wins the peasants', he believed, 'will win China. Whoever solves the land question will win the peasants.' Mao's faith in the revolutionary potential of the Chinese countryside sprang partly from his experience in organising peasant movements in his native Hunan. But it

sprang also, like much of his thought, from his interpretation of the Chinese past. Looking back on the two thousand years of the Chinese empire, Mao wrote in 1940:

'The gigantic scale of the peasant uprisings and peasant wars in China's history is without parallel in the history of the world. These peasant uprisings and peasant wars alone have formed the real motive force of China's historical evolution.'

To an orthodox Marxist, Mao's views could hardly fail to sound like heresy. Though Lenin had looked forward to the participation of the Asian peasant masses in an Asian revolutionary movement, he had never failed to insist that this movement must be led by the industrial working class. 'The city', he had said, 'inevitably leads the village. The village inevitably follows the city.' But Mao for many years paid little more than lip-service to the leadership of the working class, a class which, as he realised, as yet composed only a tiny fragment of China's population.

By the nineteen-fifties even Mao himself had concluded that his views of only twenty

years before were insufficiently orthodox. Since then his earlier writings have been published in China only in bowdlerised editions which play down his earlier emphasis on the peasant base of the Chinese revolution, and contain a number of insertions which stress, instead, the leading role of the proletariat.

By the end of 1930 there were eleven rural soviets in China, most of them modelled on the Chu-Mao soviet in Kiangsi. In 1931 delegates from these areas met in Mao's capital at Juichin and proclaimed the establishment of the Chinese Soviet Republic with Mao as its first chairman. Despite the failure of a second series of town risings in 1930, however, the official leadership of the Chinese communist party (all trained in Moscow and known in China as the 'Returned Students') remained deeply suspicious of Mao's preference for peasant guerrilla warfare. In 1931, the Central Committee, from which Mao had been dropped a few years earlier, because of fears for his orthodoxy, moved to Juichin. It spent the next three years trying to reduce Mao's role as Chairman of the Soviet Republic to that of a figurehead.

*Below right: Japanese troops in action early in the Sino-Japanese war. Right: their Chinese opponents: a photograph by Cecil Beaton of commandos at a Nationalist training camp. General Stilwell was scathing about the inefficiency and corruption of the Nationalist army. 'What saved China', he wrote, 'was not the fighting of the army but the size of the country and lack of communications . . . The Chinese Red Cross is a racket. Stealing and sale of medicines is rampant. The army gets nothing. Malnutrition and sickness is ruining the army; the higher-ups steal the soldiers' food. A pretty picture'. (Imperial War Museum, London.)*

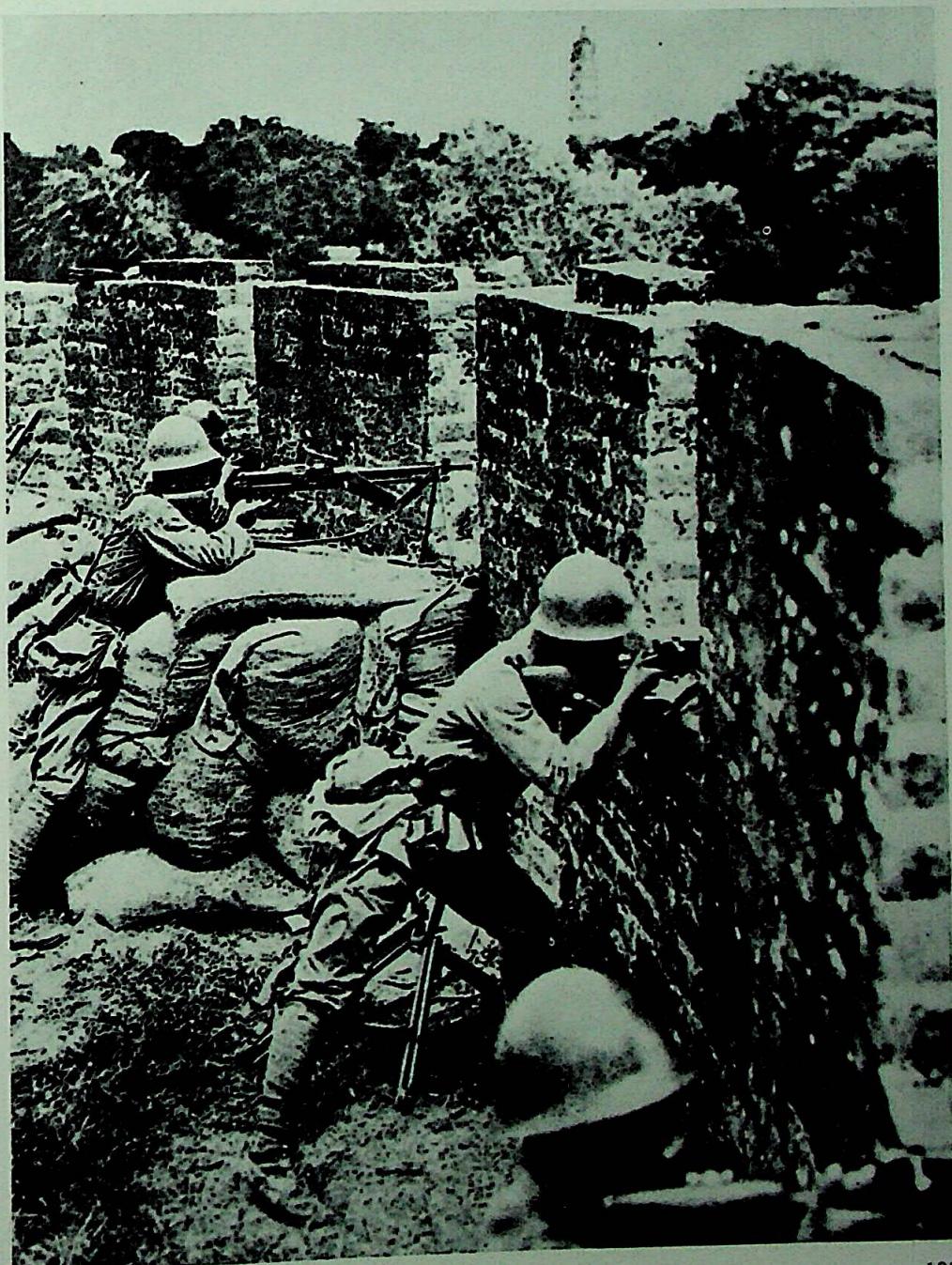
### The Long March

For three years after Mao's flight to the mountains Chiang Kai-shek had been unable, because of the intrigues of his warlord supporters, to send a large-scale expedition against him. At the end of 1930, however, he began the first of five 'annihilation campaigns' against the rural soviets. Even after the Manchurian incident Chiang still insisted that China's first priority, before resistance to the Japanese, must be the destruction of the communism within its borders. By 1934 he had come within an inch of success.

To avoid annihilation, the Kiangsi soviet, and what remained of the rest of the Chinese Soviet Republic were forced to begin a 6,000-mile march to the mountain stronghold of Shensi in north-west China. The Red Army later claimed to have crossed in its journey eighteen mountain ranges and twenty-four rivers, to have occupied at various times more than sixty cities, and to have broken through the armies of ten warlords and dozens of Kuomintang regiments.

Of the 130,000 who set out (100,000 soldiers and 30,000 civilians), only 30,000 reached Shensi. But they arrived with their cohesion unbroken and their morale high. 'In the whole of history', wrote Mao, 'has there ever been a march like ours?' He was probably right to reply to his own question in the negative. Napoleon's retreat from Moscow had been a third as long and over less difficult ground, but the army of the greatest general in European history had been broken and demoralised by it.

Besides ensuring the survival of the Chinese communist party, the Long March also won it over to Mao's strategy of peasant revolution. In January 1935, while the March was still in its early stages, the Returned Students were forced to surrender power to Mao, who became the new chairman of the party's central committee. Mao's battle cry, from the moment the Red Army reached Shensi, was to call for a united front against Japan. Many of Chiang's own supporters were by now disillusioned with his policy of waging war on the com-





*Kuomintang China. Above: a blind beggar with begging bowl, led by a child whom he kept on a lead. A picture taken by Henri Cartier-Bresson during the final years of Nationalist rule in China after the Second World War.*

munists whilst allowing Japan to strengthen her hold on northern China. In December 1936 he was kidnapped by some of his own troops and forced to agree to an alliance with Mao. This alliance was one of the factors which persuaded the Japanese army to end its previous policy of creeping imperialism and provoke an open war with China in the following year.

#### Towards a Communist China

In 1937 few people, even in China, expected Mao and the Chinese communists to emerge from the war with Japan poised for the final conquest of power in China. Already, however, the Kuomintang possessed two crucial weaknesses which in the end were to prove decisive. Under the leadership of Chiang Kai-shek the Kuomintang, which had once considered itself a revolutionary party, had become an ideological vacuum. On the question of land reform, the most serious of all the internal problems facing China, it had no policy at all. In the areas which it recaptured from the communists, it took the land from the peasants and returned it to the landlords. In the long term it could not hope to compete with the

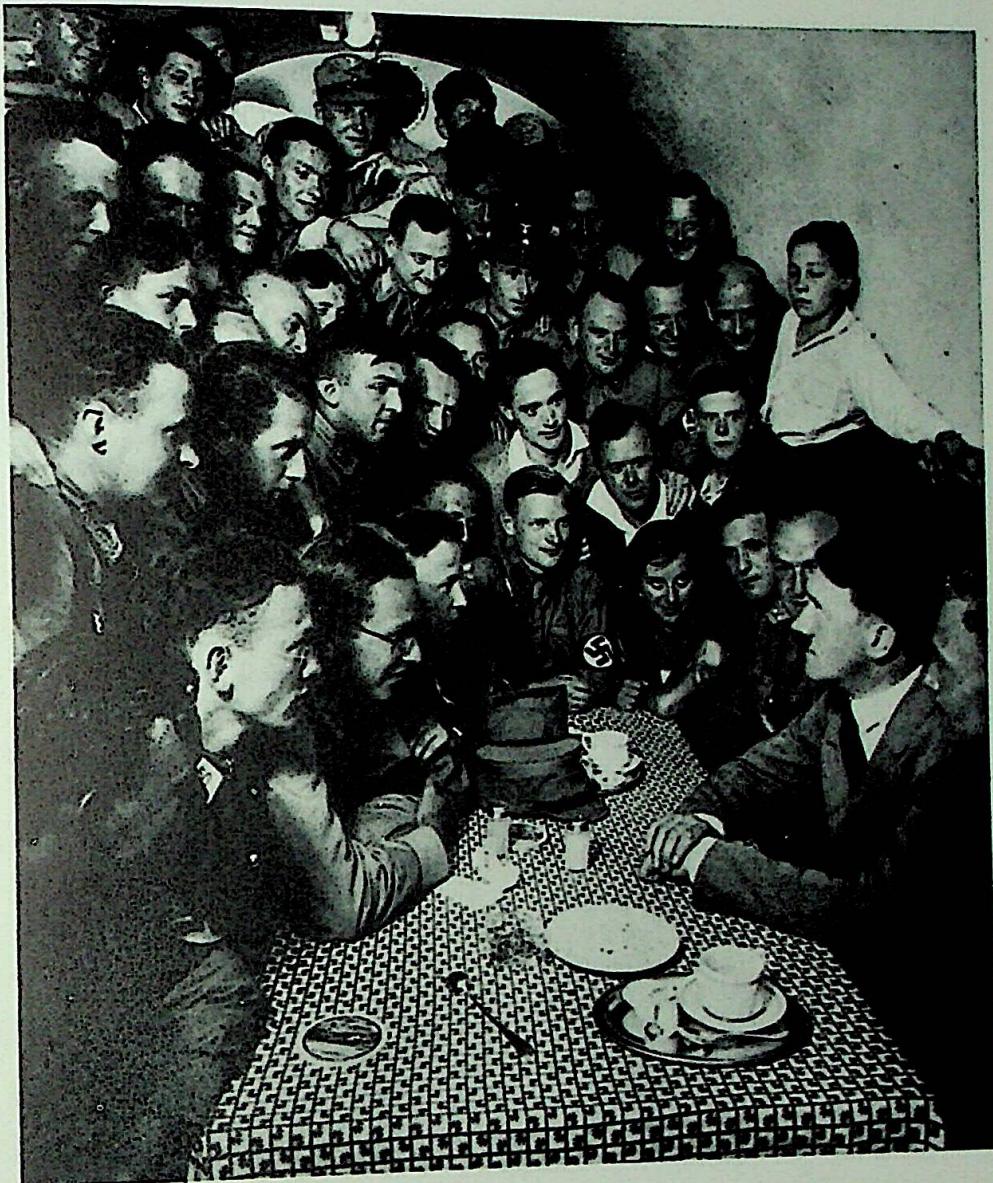
communists for the loyalty of China's peasant masses.

The second great weakness of the Kuomintang was its inability to fight a guerrilla war. After 1939, with much of China in Japanese hands, Chiang went on the defensive for the remainder of the war. The communists, however, waged a continuous series of guerrilla campaigns within occupied China, with the aim not merely of fighting the Japanese but of spreading the revolution in the countryside. 'The Red Army', wrote Mao, 'fights not merely for the sake of fighting, but to agitate the masses, to organise them, to arm them, and to help them establish revolutionary political power.' Just as Japanese aggression during the First World War had led China to turn her back on the West, so Japanese aggression on a far larger scale during the Second World War was to create the conditions for a communist victory.

The century from the Opium Wars to the birth of the Chinese People's Republic now seems, in retrospect, an abnormal interlude in the course of China's history. By the middle of the twentieth century China would once again find itself almost as isolated from the West as in the middle of the nineteenth century, as convinced as before that it had nothing of real importance to learn from the West. Once again China thought of itself as the Middle Kingdom, the centre of civilisation in a world otherwise almost entirely composed of oppressed peoples, imperialists and revolutionists. But its experience of the

outside world during the last century had left China convinced for the first time in its history of a world mission.

Mao's strategy of revolution, first devised during the days of the Kiangsi Soviet, though careful to emphasise the leading role of the proletariat remained essentially unchanged. That strategy, however, was now applied on a world scale. 'Taking the entire globe', wrote Mao's 'close comrade in arms', Lin Piao, 'if North America and western Europe can be called "the cities of the world", Asia, Africa, and Latin America constitute "the countryside of the world".... In a sense, the contemporary world revolution presents a picture of the encirclement of the cities by the countryside.' The strategy of Chinese revolution had become the strategy of world revolution.



## The decline of democracy in Europe

*Hitler and Stalin establish the world's first totalitarian states; Russia becomes a great industrial nation; Germany resumes its bid for the mastery of Europe; the democracies lose faith in themselves.*

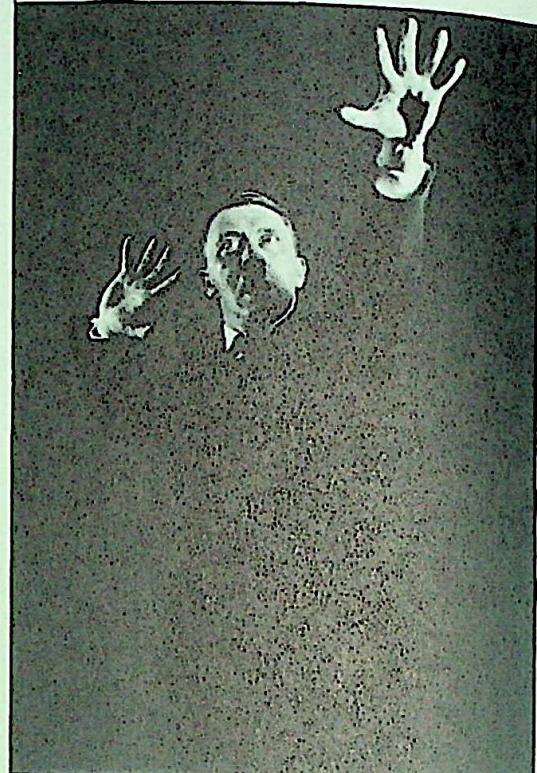
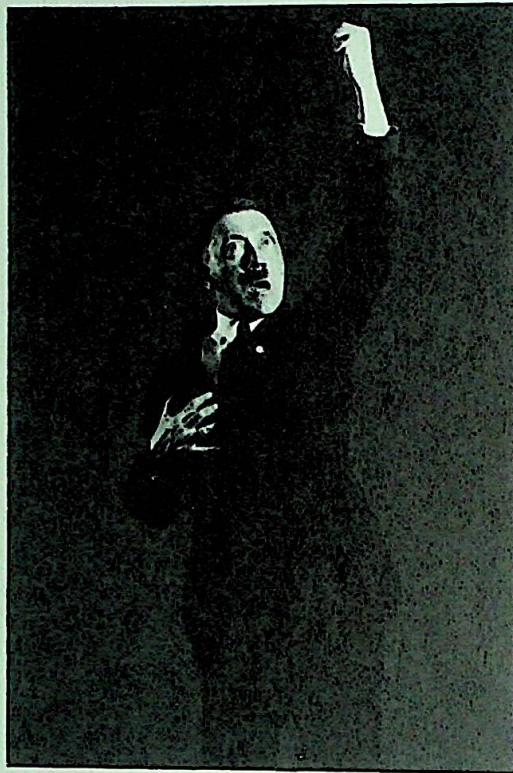
### The rise of Adolf Hitler

The sheer frightfulness of Adolf Hitler has made historians reluctant to recognise his extraordinary genius. No other man in the history of modern Europe, perhaps not even Lenin, has seemed so able to bend history to his will. Yet Hitler began his political career in Germany with almost every conceivable disadvantage. He was, to begin with, not a German at all but an Austrian who acquired German citizenship only a

year before he became German chancellor. Until the First World War when he became a lance-corporal in the German army, Hitler had lived in the slums of Vienna and Munich, struggling to earn a living as an unsuccessful artist selling poster designs and water colours painted on the back of postcards. After the war he was several times afraid that his new career as a political agitator in Germany would be cut short by deportation to Austria.

Unlike Lenin, Hitler did not have behind

*Above: the Führer and his followers. No man in modern history has possessed a more extraordinary gift of personal magnetism. 'Those large blue eyes! Like stars!' wrote Goebbels after one of his first meetings with Hitler in 1925. 'He is glad to see me. I am supremely happy!'*



him an established political party bound together by a long revolutionary tradition. The Nazi party in Germany was Hitler's own creation. Yet Hitler's vision of the future, though far more malevolent than Lenin's, also came closer to fulfilment. The European revolution of which Lenin had been so confident in 1917, never came and the party which he had believed would make Russia free became the instrument instead of the most absolute despotism in Russian history. But in 1924, at the lowest ebb of his political career after the failure of the Munich putsch, Hitler was already able in *Mein Kampf* to describe with horrifying accuracy the Europe which during the Second World War he almost succeeded in creating.

#### 'A terrible simplifier'

The great Swiss historian, Jacob Burkhardt, writing at the end of the nineteenth century, had foreseen that the greatest danger to the future of the liberal state in twentieth-century Europe would come from 'terrible simplifiers' who would take control of it and 'rule with utter brutality'. This is what Hitler was. 'I have', he said privately in 1932, 'the gift of reducing all problems to their simplest proportions'. This gift, Hitler was convinced, was the key to his success. 'I shall tell you', he told a foreign journalist in 1936, 'what has carried me to the position I have reached. Our political problems appeared complicated. The German people could make nothing of them. . . . I, on the other hand, simplified these problems and reduced them to the simplest terms. The masses realised this and followed me.'

Part of Hitler's political genius was his ability to provide a simple and persuasive explanation for Germany's complex mis-

fortunes. He told his followers in 1925:

'To make a struggle intelligible to the broad masses, it must always be carried on against two things, against a person and against a cause. Against whom did England fight? Against the German emperor as a person, and against militarism as a cause. . . . Against whom, therefore, must our movement fight? Against the Jew as a person and against Marxism as a cause.'

Hitler portrayed Marxism itself as an essentially Jewish movement, the creation of 'that modern Mordecai, Karl Marx'. By a remarkable intellectual sleight of hand he convinced both himself and his followers that international capitalism, which was responsible for Germany's economic distress, and international communism, which sought to make Germany its captive, were, though apparently opposed, both part of the same 'Judeo-Bolshevik conspiracy' which was at the root of all Germany's misfortunes.

Despite the undoubtedly appeal to many of his followers of Hitler's simple diagnosis of Germany's misfortune, it was his even simpler solution to them which was the real secret of his success. This solution, Hitler insisted, was not a question of this or that policy but 'a matter of will-power'. 'No word', writes his biographer, Alan Bullock, 'was more frequently on Hitler's lips than "will".' Will-power alone, Hitler insisted—his own will-power—could make Germany prosperous and strong once more.

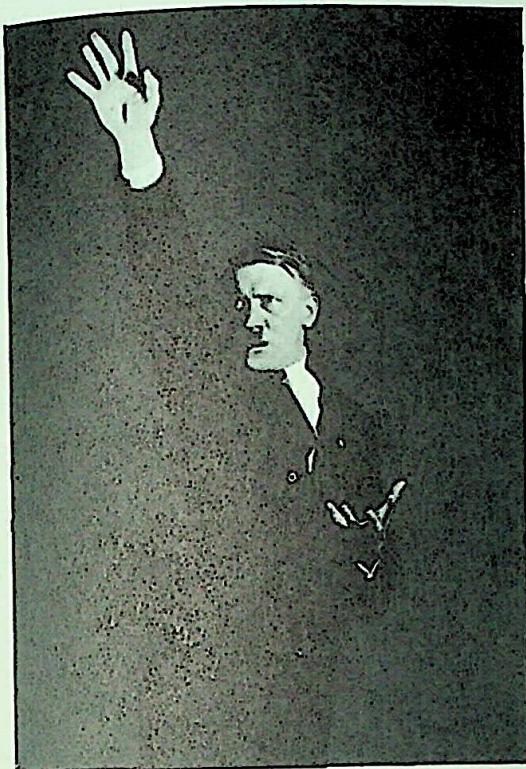
The fact that so many Germans believed Hitler was due, above all, to the extraordinary magnetism of his personality. Nor, as is sometimes implied, was his appeal confined to mass rallies of the simple minded

herded together in the Nuremberg stadium. Hitler excelled in varying his appeal according to his audience. Lloyd George, himself one of the most powerful personalities in the history of British politics, returned in 1936 from a visit to Germany convinced that Hitler was 'a born leader, a magnetic, dynamic personality' (with, incidentally, no desire 'to invade any other land'). A series of eminent visitors from many lands left Hitler's country retreat at Berchtesgaden with the same impression.

#### The collapse of German democracy

Until the Great Depression the mass resentments to which Hitler needed to appeal did not exist. After the fiasco of the Munich putsch in 1923 most people both inside and outside Germany had written Hitler off. When Lord D'Abernon, the former British ambassador in Berlin, published two volumes of his memoirs in 1929, he mentioned Hitler only in a footnote. After referring briefly to Hitler's imprisonment after the putsch, he concluded: 'He was finally released after six months and bound over for the rest of his sentence, thereafter fading into oblivion.'

The early nineteen-twenties had already shown that the Nazis needed an economic crisis to come to power. In May 1924, during the aftermath of the postwar inflation, the Nazis gained thirty-two seats at their first general election, even though Hitler himself was still in prison. But at the next election in the following December, when the economic climate was beginning to improve, they held only fifteen of these seats. In 1928, when the Weimar Republic was at the height of its prosperity, the Nazis lost three more seats. As long as that pros-



*Left: Hitler gesticulates in private, observed only by his photographer, Heinrich Hoffmann. After studying Hoffmann's photographs Hitler selected the most effective gesticulations for use in public.*

perity continued the Nazis were doomed to remain on the fringe of German politics.

In the short term the depression did more damage to the German economy than to any other economy in Europe. By 1932 industrial production had fallen by almost a half, and six million men—one-third of the German labour force—were unemployed. Parliamentary government in Germany survived the Wall Street crash by only six months.

After the breakdown of the coalition government led by the social democrat, Hermann Müller, in March 1930, effective political power passed from the chancellor to President Hindenburg and the 'palace camarilla' which surrounded him, dominated by Hindenburg's son Oscar and Oscar's friend, General Schleicher. Since his election in 1925 Hindenburg had been the model of a constitutional president, accepting the decisions of his ministers and the votes of the Reichstag. After Müller's resignation, however, no chancellor until Adolf Hitler was able to win a stable majority in the Reichstag. Hitler's three predecessors as chancellor (Bruning in March 1930, von Papen in April 1932, Schleicher in December 1932) were the nominees of the 'palace camarilla'. All relied not on the consent of the Reichstag but on emergency decrees signed by the president.

The depression made the Nazis a major political force for the first time. In 1930, at the first election after the Wall Street crash, Nazi seats in the Reichstag shot up from 12 to 107. In July 1932, at the worst moment of the Depression, the Nazis won 37 per cent of the vote and 230 seats, more than any other party in the history of the Weimar Republic (though still well short of an absolute majority in the Reichstag). By the

autumn of 1932, however, it seemed that the party had passed its peak.

At the next election in November 1932 the Nazis lost two million votes. The party was on the verge of bankruptcy. By the end of the year it had run out of funds to finance the 400,000 men of the SA, its private army of stormtroopers. The SA were given collecting boxes and told to beg in the streets. 'This year', wrote Goebbels in his diary at the end of 1932, 'has brought us eternal ill luck. ... The future looks dark and gloomy.' At the polls the Nazis seemed condemned to a gradual decline as prosperity returned. The only alternative appeared to be a Nazi *coup d'état*. But this was an alternative which Hitler himself had ruled out ever since the failure of the Munich putsch.

#### Hitler in power

That the Nazis became the masters of Germany in 1933 was due less to their own strength than to the failures of their opponents. At the elections of November 1932 the German left—the social democrats and communists—had won more votes than the Nazis. But the two parties of the left were hopelessly divided between themselves. The socialists had lost the will to govern. Like the Labour party in England, they could not reconcile themselves to carrying out an economic policy of deflation which was bound to bear most heavily on their own supporters. The communists believed that a Nazi victory in Germany would signal the death throes of German capitalism. On instructions from Moscow they concentrated not on resisting Hitler but on trying to establish themselves as the only party of the left. 'Our principal struggle', said the party newspaper, the *Rote Fahne*, on the eve of Hitler's rise to power, 'is

against social democracy.'

But the divisions of the left were less crucial than the miscalculations of the right. Baron von Papen, ousted as chancellor by General Schleicher, devised a scheme to use an alliance with Hitler to recover political power. As a preliminary he persuaded a group of Rhineland businessmen to save the Nazis from bankruptcy. Then he helped Hitler to arrange an alliance between the Nazis and the right-wing Nationalist party. At this critical moment the army high command came out in favour of a Hitler government. Hitler himself believed that its support was crucial. 'If the army had not stood on our side', he declared after he became chancellor, 'we should not have been standing here today.'

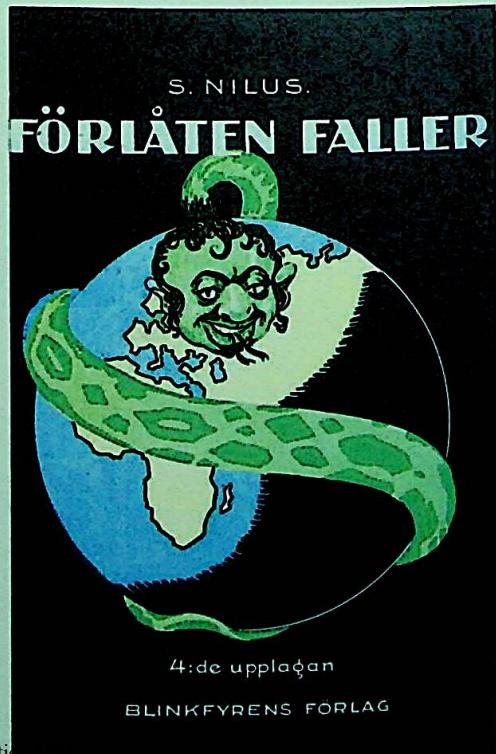
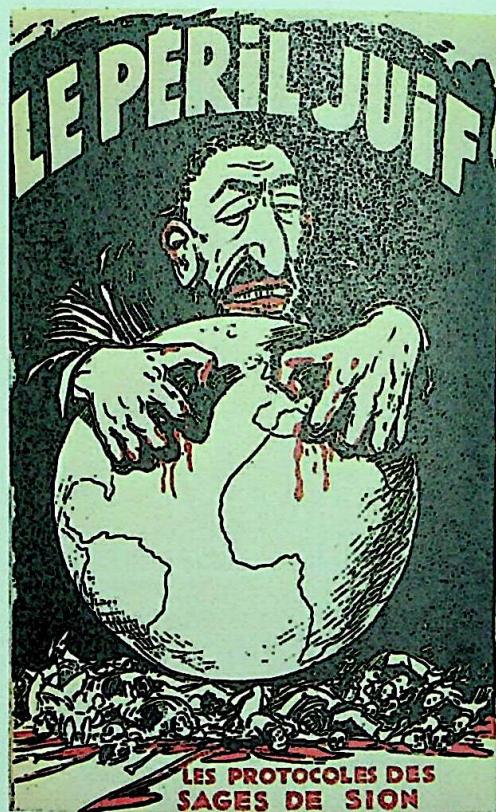
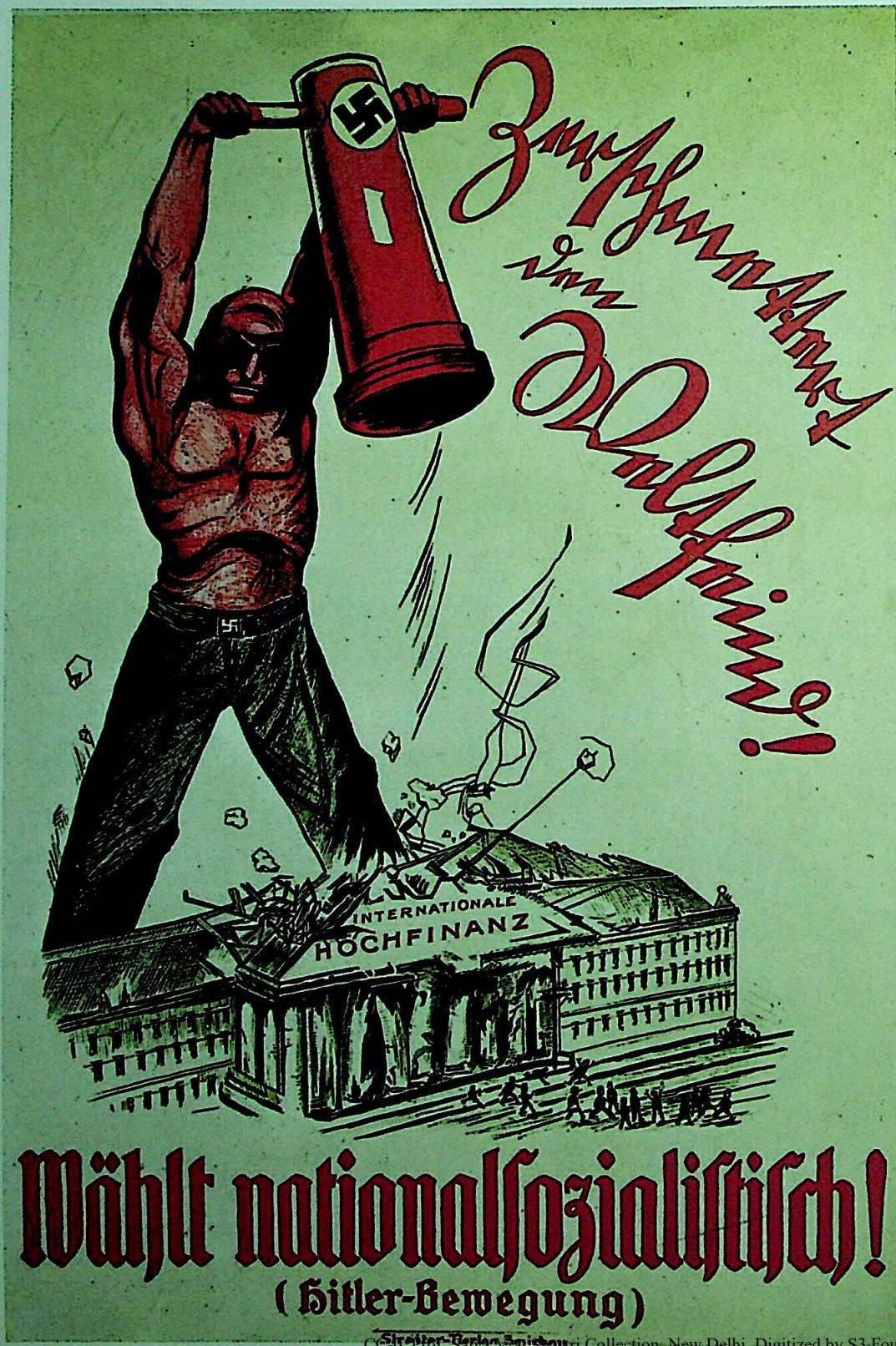
'You will not think it possible, gentlemen', Hindenburg told two of his generals on 26 January 1933, 'that I should appoint that Austrian lance-corporal chancellor.' He had the best constitutional reasons for changing his mind four days later. If, as then seemed possible, the Nazi-Nationalist alliance won the support of the Catholic Centre party, it would be the first coalition to win a majority in the Reichstag since the fall of Müller's government three years before. On 30 January 1933 Adolf Hitler became chancellor of Germany.

#### Nazi Germany

The politicians, industrialists, and generals who had brought Hitler to power had done so in the belief that they could use him for their own purposes. The coalition government which Hitler headed contained only two other Nazi ministers. Papen, as vice-chancellor, was confident that with nine non-Nazis in a cabinet of twelve real power

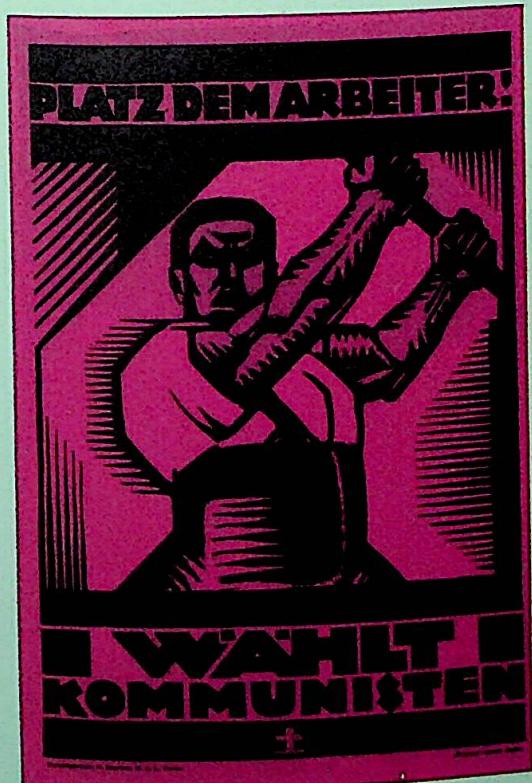
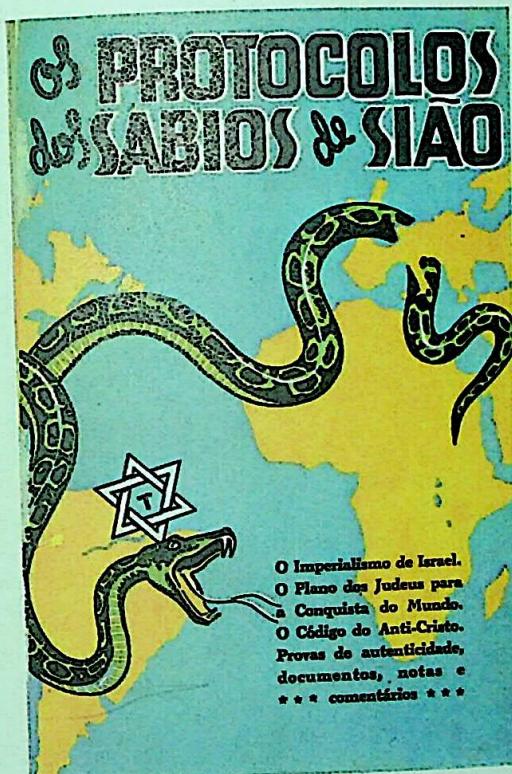
Below left: 'Smash the world's enemy!' The Nazis destroy the power of 'international' (i.e. Jewish) high finance and deliver Germany from the Great Depression. French (below right), Swedish (bottom right) and Brazilian (below far right) editions of The Protocols of the Elders of Zion, the most widely circulated anti-semitic tract during the inter-war years, describing an alleged Jewish plot for the enslavement of the world. In 1935 it became a prescribed textbook in German schools. 'Antisemitic propaganda in all countries', wrote Hitler, is an almost indispensable medium for the

extension of our political campaign. You will see how little time we shall need in order to upset the beliefs and values of the whole world simply by attacking Judaism. It is beyond question the most important weapon in any arsenal, and one of almost deadly efficiency.' Twenty-five years after the Second World War the Protocols were still being quoted in Egyptian government publications. (Wiener Library, London.)



Bottom: a communist election poster, 1932. The rise of the communist vote to almost six million in November 1932 enabled Hitler to claim that Germany was threatened by a communist coup d'état. 'There were weeks at the beginning of the year', said Hitler in September 1933, 'when we passed within a hair's breadth of the abyss of a Bolshevik revolution'.

Below: the Nazis rattle the Bolshevik skeleton. A Nazi election poster of 1932 sarcastically congratulates von Papen, the chancellor, on playing into the hands of the communists, and concludes: 'Only one man can save us from Bolshevism—Adolf Hitler!' Hitler's pose as the defender of Germany against Bolshevism helped not merely to win him support within Germany itself but also to increase his international respectability. 'The sturdy young Nazis of Germany', wrote Rothermere, the English press lord, in November 1933, 'are Europe's guardians against the communist danger'.





Above: 'The Marshal and the Corporal. Fight with us for freedom and equal rights': a Nazi election poster of 1933. Hitler himself later acknowledged that Hindenburg 'called upon me to accept the chancellorship (in January 1933) only because he could see no other way out of the constitutional impasse'. Within a few weeks, however, Hitler had completely won Hindenburg's confidence: 'When later the first results of the (March) elections began to come in, our relations had attained such a degree of frank cordiality that the Old Gentleman exclaimed in a voice charged with real satisfaction, "Hitler wins!" And when the overwhelming victory of the National Socialist was confirmed, he told me straight out that he had always been averse

to the parliamentary game and was delighted that the comedy of elections was now done with once and for all.'

Right: recruits of the German army taking the oath of allegiance to Hitler. On the death President Hindenburg in August 1934 the offices of chancellor and president were combined and Hitler became head of state and commander in chief of the armed forces. To ensure obedience all officers and men were required to swear allegiance to their Führer.

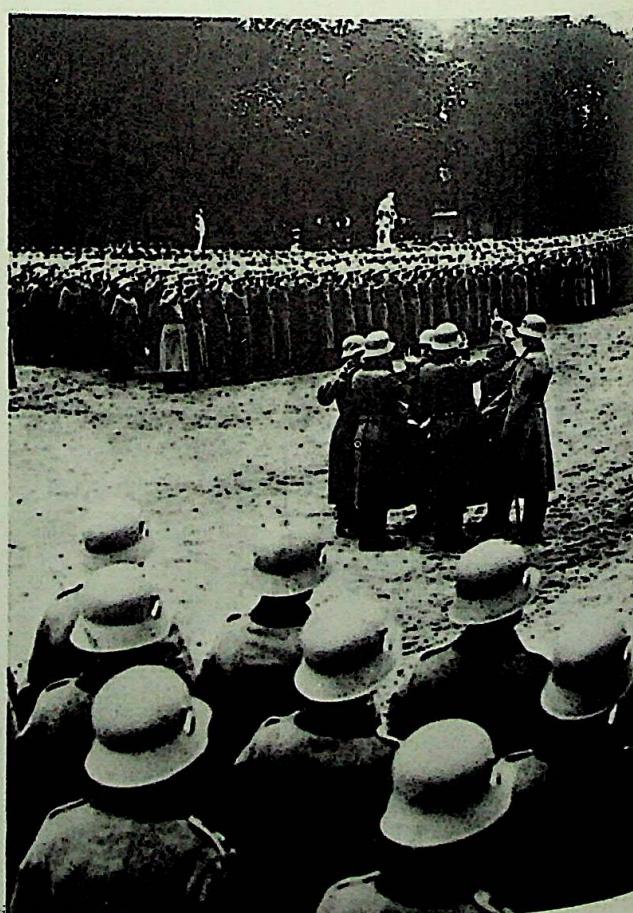
would remain with him. But they failed to realise that with the two Nazi ministers, Frick and Göring, in control of internal affairs, and the pro-Nazi General Blomberg as minister of defence, Hitler effectively controlled the police and was assured of the army's benevolent neutrality.

Hitler's first act as chancellor was to ensure the failure of the negotiations with the Catholic Centre Party which might have given his government a majority in the Reichstag. His colleagues in the cabinet were then persuaded to agree to a new election, which Hitler intended to precede by a campaign of intimidation designed to give him the absolute majority he could not win in a free election.

The mastermind of this campaign was Hermann Göring, whose gross exterior concealed surprising energy and ruthlessness. In only a few weeks Göring had laid the foundations of the Nazi police state: 40,000 men of the SA and the SS (Hitler's praetorian guard) were drafted into the police force and given unlimited opportunity to indulge the pent-up sadism accumulated during the years in opposition.

Göring declared:

'Police officers who make use of fire-arms in the execution of their duties will, without regard to the consequences of such use, benefit by my protection; those who, out of a misplaced regard for the consequences fail in their duty will be punished in accordance with the regulations.'





In several parts of Germany local Nazi leaders founded concentration camps on their own initiative as centres of imprisonment and torture for their opponents. To assist them in tracking down their victims, Göring transformed the political police of the Weimar Republic into the infinitely more sinister Gestapo—the secret police.

Despite a brilliantly sustained campaign of intimidation, however, the Nazis won only 44 per cent of the vote at the March election. By outlawing all the communist deputies (most of whom were already in concentration camps) Hitler succeeded none the less in giving himself a clear overall majority. He then bullied the new Reichstag into giving the necessary two-thirds majority for an 'Enabling Law' which made him the dictator of Germany.

### Gleichschaltung

Hitler now began the subordination of every facet of German life to the control of the Nazi party, a process euphemistically described as *Gleichschaltung* or 'coordination'. All other political parties and the trade unions were abolished. The Reichstag was reduced to a cipher which met occasionally to be harangued by the Führer. Mass communications and German culture were handed over to Dr Joseph Goebbels who assumed the preposterous title of 'minister of propaganda and public enlightenment'.

No legal redress was possible against Nazi tyranny. 'The law and the will of the Führer', said Göring, 'are one.' Hitler

himself gave a striking practical demonstration of this principle on the 'Night of the Long Knives' in June 1934, when he ordered the simultaneous assassination of a number of past opponents and disaffected supporters (notably Röhm, the leader of the SA). In a speech to the Reichstag Hitler explained that he had acted as 'the supreme justiciar of the German people'.

After Hindenburg's death in August 1934 Hitler also became the head of state. The offices of chancellor and president, he announced, had now been combined in his person. As president (though he still preferred to call himself Führer) Hitler automatically became the new commander-in-chief of the German army, which was now required to pledge its loyalty not to the Fatherland but to Hitler himself.

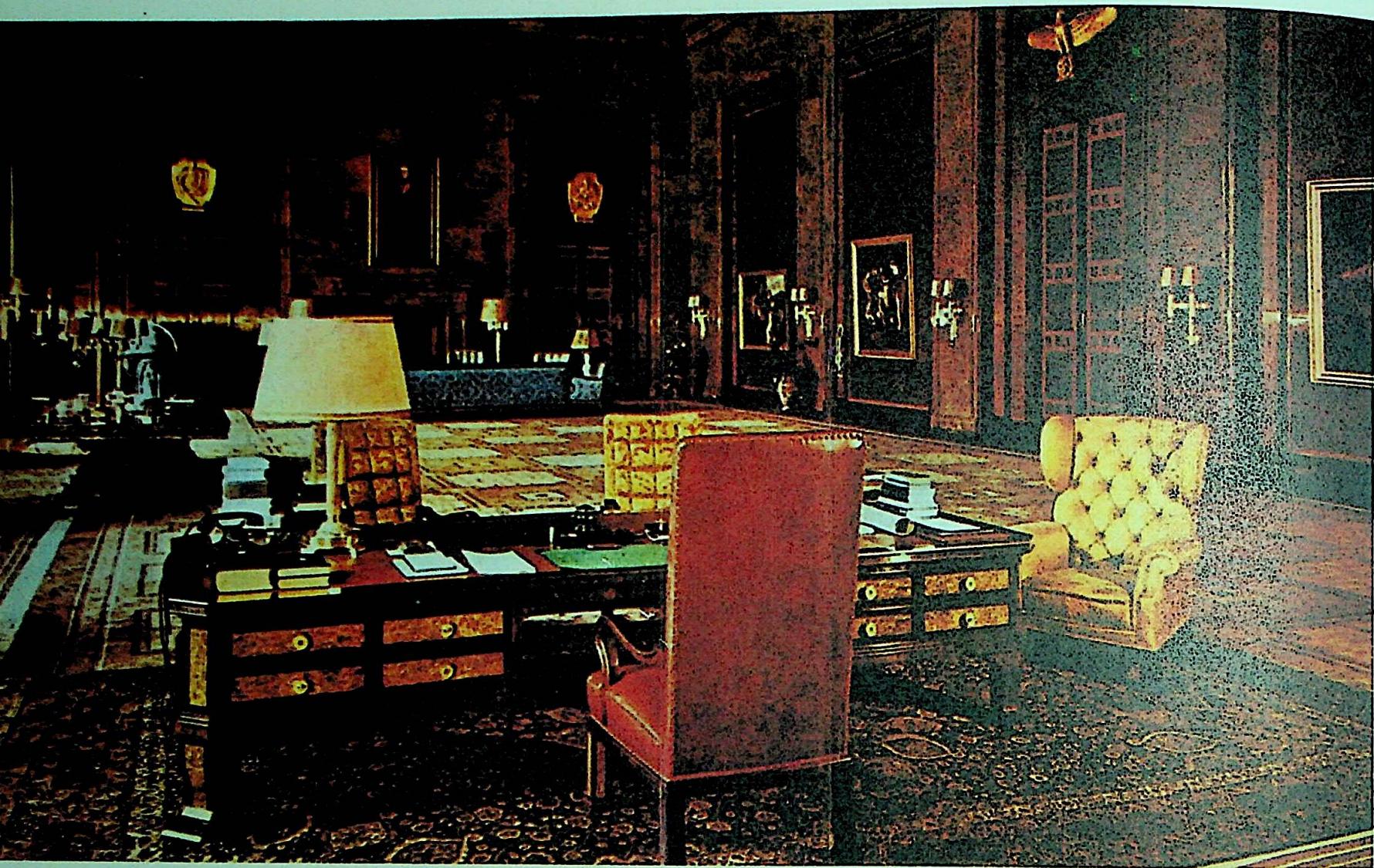
Only one section of German society remained outside the process of *Gleichschaltung*. This was the Jewish community, which Hitler sought to isolate from the remainder of the German people in preparation for its eventual liquidation. Jews were excluded from the civil service, from the professions, from sport and from the arts. Boycotts were organised of Jewish shops, and blacklists were published of those housewives who dared to defy it.

In 1935 the Nuremberg Race Laws made illegal either marriage or sexual relations between Jews and other Germans. The so-called 'Crystal Night' in November 1938, when hundreds of Jews were murdered and synagogues throughout Germany were burnt to the ground, showed how far



*Above left: 'Through day to night': a photomontage by John Heartfield (the pseudonym of a German exile living in Britain). Dr Goebbels, Hitler's minister of propaganda and 'public enlightenment', presides over the destruction of the Reichstag and anti-Nazi culture. The burning of the Reichstag in February 1933 (possibly by a demented Dutch communist, possibly by the Nazis themselves) was denounced by Hitler as a communist plot and used as a pretext to step up the Nazi reign of terror which preceded the March elections. (John Heartfield Collection.)*

*Left: Hitler with Hindenburg and Göring in 1933. Though designated by Hitler as his successor in 1939, Göring was perhaps the most widely underrated of the Nazi leaders. Curiously, it was not until the Nuremberg war crimes trial after the Second World War that his enemies began to appreciate the full extent of his abilities. 'Göring', wrote Lord Justice Birkett, 'is the man who has really dominated the proceedings. . . . It has been obvious that a personality of outstanding, though possibly evil, qualities was seated there in the dock. Nobody appears to have been quite prepared for this immense ability and knowledge'.*



anti-semitism had been accepted by the German people as part of their way of life. A climate of opinion was emerging in which the majority of the German people, though not supporting the mass extermination of the Jews, would be prepared to turn a blind eye to it. And it was already clear what the fate of the Jewish people would be when Hitler went to war. He told the Reichstag at the beginning of 1939 that if the Jews brought about another world war (and, by definition, all world wars were brought about by Jews) its result would be 'the annihilation of the Jewish race in Europe'.

#### 'Give us four years'

'I ask of you, German people', Hitler had said in January 1933, 'that after you have given the others fourteen years, you should give us four.' At the Nuremberg rally in November 1936 Hitler gave his own account of the achievements of those four years. No peacetime prime minister has ever been able to point to such a triumphant record of success. Unemployment had fallen in four years from six million to less than a million. Industrial production had recovered to the pre-depression level.

Hitler could claim, too, to have made Germany great as well as prosperous. In

1935 the Saar had voted to rejoin Germany and in March 1936 the German army had marched into the demilitarised Rhineland. The German government no longer recognised the restrictions of the Versailles Treaty and had begun a massive programme of rearmament. For the first time since the First World War Germany was once again feared and respected as the greatest power on the continent of Europe.

Many Germans were so enthusiastic about Hitler's achievements that they were willing to overlook the methods which he used. But there were many too who were attracted by the violence of those methods. The Freikorps era had already shown the popularity of violence among large sections of the German public. After witnessing the organised brutality of Hitler's storm-troopers during the election campaign of 1933, Germans flocked to join them. In a single year membership of the SA rose from 400,000 to three million men. The smaller and even more sinister SS was also never short of recruits. Indeed it was somewhat embarrassed by the profusion of them. Its leader, Heinrich Himmler, declared in 1937: 'We still choose only fifteen out of every hundred candidates who present themselves to us.'

Hitler's supporters before he came to

power had been concentrated among the members of the lower middle class: artisans, small shopkeepers, skilled craftsmen, minor civil servants. The depression threatened these men in a way in which it affected no other segment of German society. They felt menaced not merely with a lower standard of living (as did every class in German society) but with the loss of their middle-class status and reduction to the ranks of the working class which they despised.

Before he became chancellor Hitler did not succeed in making any serious inroads into the working-class vote. At both elections in 1932 the combined vote of the two working-class parties, the communists and social democrats, was higher than ever before. Once in power, however, Hitler rapidly established his claim to be the Führer of the whole German people.

During his first years as the ruler of Germany Hitler held a series of plebiscites to demonstrate the strength of his support. At the first of these, held only eighteen months after becoming chancellor, he gained 90 per cent of the vote in a poll of 96 per cent. In March 1936, after the re-occupation of the Rhineland, he won a majority of over 98 per cent. Whatever the reliability of these figures, there can be no doubt that the mood of the German people

*Left: Hitler's office in the Berlin Reichs-chancellery, constructed in the massive style characteristic of Nazi art and architecture. Both the German Nazis and the Russian communists had curiously similar attitudes towards the purpose of art. Henceforth, Lenin announced in 1921, art must be 'monumental propaganda'.*

*Below: 'Hitler's State' by Magnus Zeller, painted in secret in Potsdam in 1938. Zeller's was a minority view: Hitler's supporters in Germany far exceeded his opponents.*

as a whole was, in the words of Alan Bullock, one of 'overwhelming gratitude and approval'.

Nowhere was Hitler's support more secure than among the youth of Germany. The Nazis had captured control of the German student movement as early as 1931. Once the Nazis came to power, all

German children aged six or over were compelled to join the Hitler Youth. At school their teachers brought them up in the Nazi faith. No wonder, then, that Hitler could declare in 1933: 'When an opponent says, "I will not come over to your side", I calmly reply, "Your child belongs to us already".

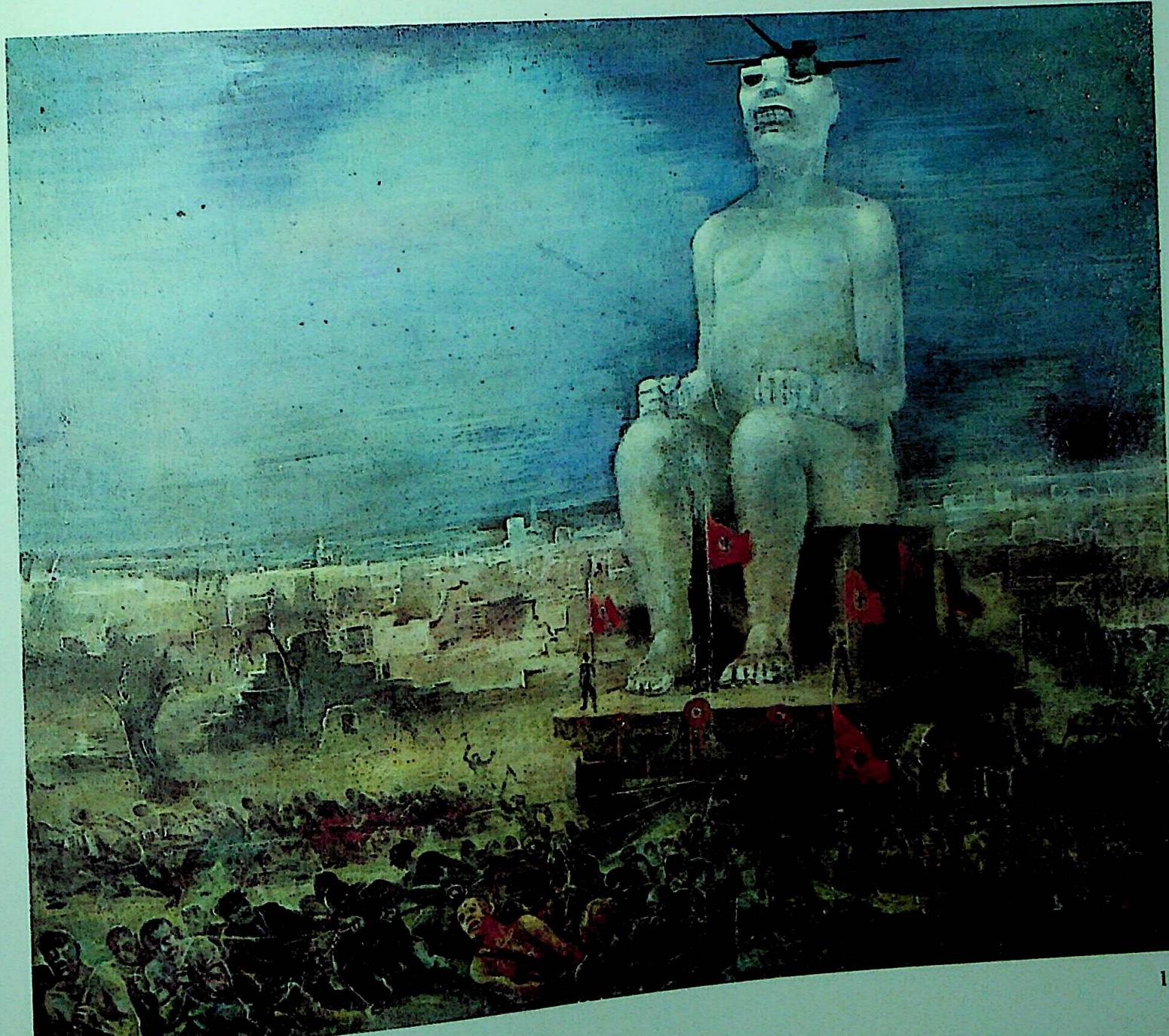
The opposition to Hitler was both weak and powerless. Even the concentration camps, to which the Nazis had no hesitation in despatching their opponents, had a population of only 25,000 at the outbreak of war out of a total German population which numbered 80 million. No government anywhere in the world between the wars commanded the enthusiasm which Adolf Hitler earned from the German people.

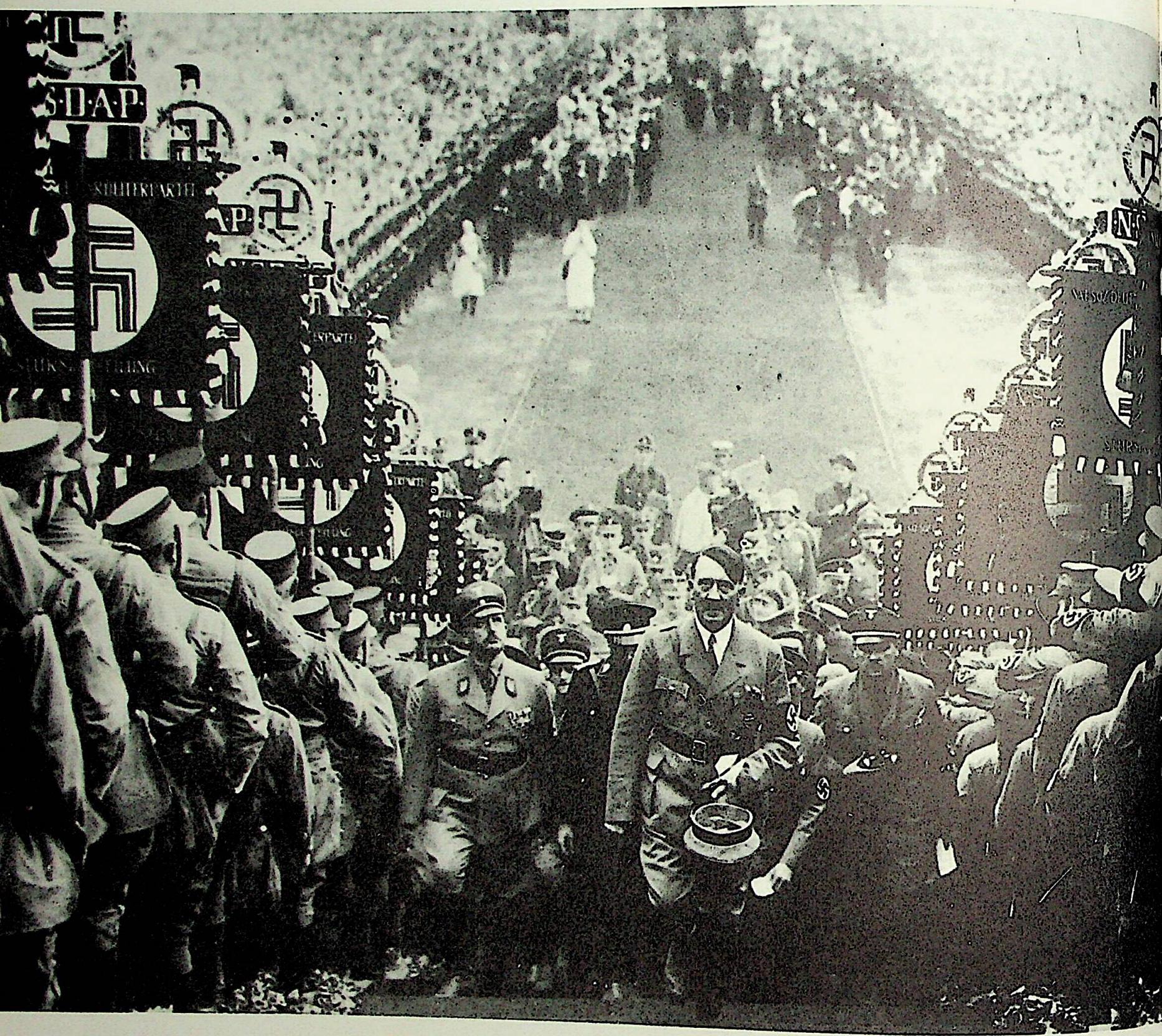
### Stalin's Russia

'Having become General Secretary', wrote Lenin in his political testament, 'Comrade

Stalin has acquired immense power in his hands, and I am not certain that he will always know how to use this power with sufficient caution.' A few days later he added a final postscript suggesting that Stalin be replaced by someone 'more patient, more loyal, more polite and considerate to other comrades, less capricious and so on'. Lenin had intended that his testament should be read to delegates to the party congress after his death in January 1924. Instead Stalin ensured that it was not published in Russia during his lifetime. It is difficult to think of any other document in modern history whose suppression has had consequences of comparable magnitude.

Two things enabled Stalin to win the struggle for power which followed Lenin's death: his lack of any obvious talent and his control of the party machine. In 1924 Stalin was not even considered a serious candidate for the succession. Had it been





otherwise his rivals would hardly have agreed to suppress Lenin's condemnation of him. As yet no one heeded Lenin's warning of the 'immense power' which Stalin had gathered in his hands. The most obvious candidate to succeed Lenin was Leon Trotsky, at once the party's leading intellectual, the organiser of the November Revolution, and the hero of the Civil War. By comparison Stalin seemed what Trotsky called him: 'a dull mediocrity'.

To defeat Trotsky Stalin joined forces with his two main rivals, Kamenev and Zinoviev, the chairmen respectively of the

Moscow and Leningrad (formerly Petrograd) Bolshevik parties. Trotsky lost the battle for power essentially because he was less unscrupulous than Stalin. His control of the Red Army gave him an even more powerful weapon than Stalin's command of the party machine, had he been prepared to use it. But Trotsky, unlike Stalin, had a horror of becoming the Bonaparte of the Russian Revolution. In January 1925 Stalin was able to force Trotsky's resignation from his key position as commissar for war. Having disposed of Trotsky, Stalin now turned on his former allies, Kamenev

and Zinoviev, using his power as general secretary to undermine their control of the Moscow and Leningrad party machines. At the 1927 party congress Stalin emerged as the ruler of Russia.

#### 'Socialism in one country'

The Bolsheviks in the nineteen-twenties found themselves out on a limb. In 1917 they had been sublimely confident that their own revolution in Russia would quickly be followed by the rest of Europe. By the time of Lenin's death this confidence had gone. Europe by now showed little



sign of following Russia's example. The most logical course of action, in Marxist terms, seemed either to concentrate all Russia's resources on an all-out attempt to spread the revolution to the rest of Europe (a view favoured by Trotsky) or else to postpone the establishment of socialism in Russia itself. Instead, in the autumn of 1924 Stalin formulated the slogan of 'socialism in one country'. Russia, he argued, must advance to socialism without waiting for the rest of Europe.

Stalin's excursion into the world of ideology took his colleagues by surprise.

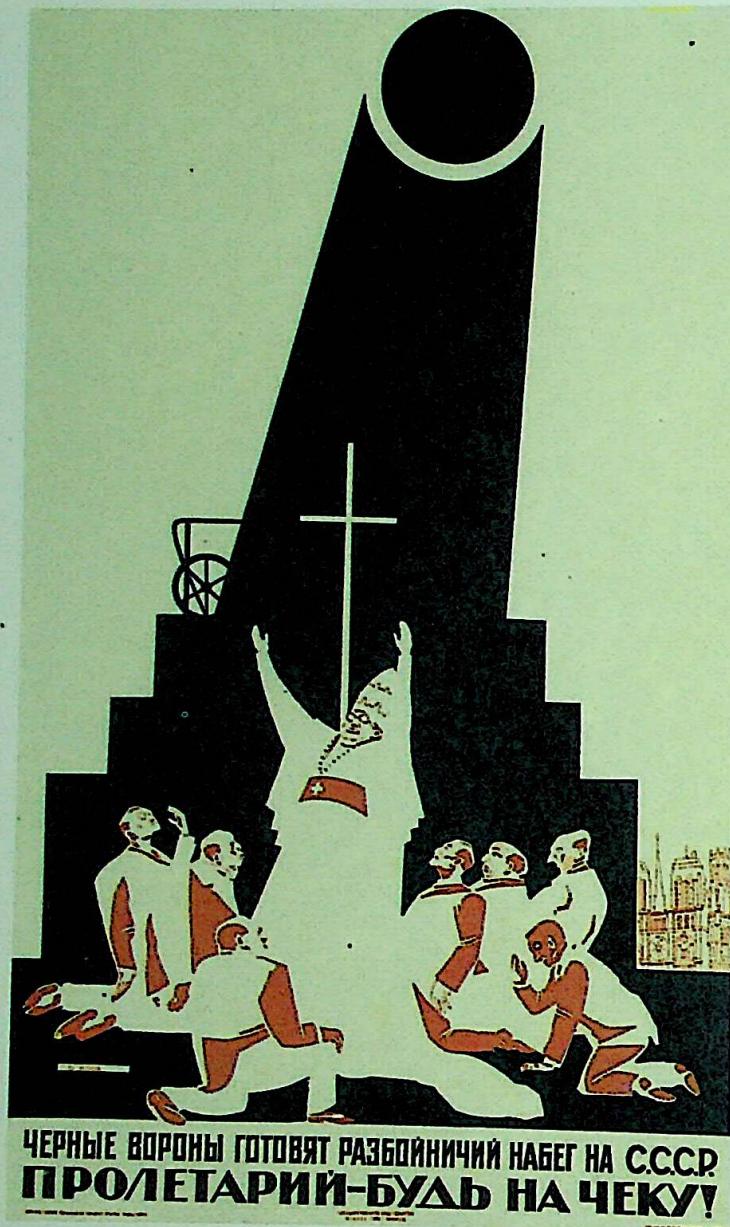


*Left: Hitler at a harvest festival celebration soon after the outbreak of war in 1939. The Nazis raised their rallies almost to the level of an art form. Henderson, the British ambassador, wrote in his memoirs of one of the party rallies which he attended: 'I had spent six years in St Petersburg before the war in the best days of the Russian ballet, but for grandiose beauty I have never seen a ballet to compare with it'.*

*Above: The Nuremberg laws in action. A Jew and his 'Aryan' mistress are paraded by the Nazis round the streets of Berlin with placards round their necks proclaiming their offence against 'racial purity'.*

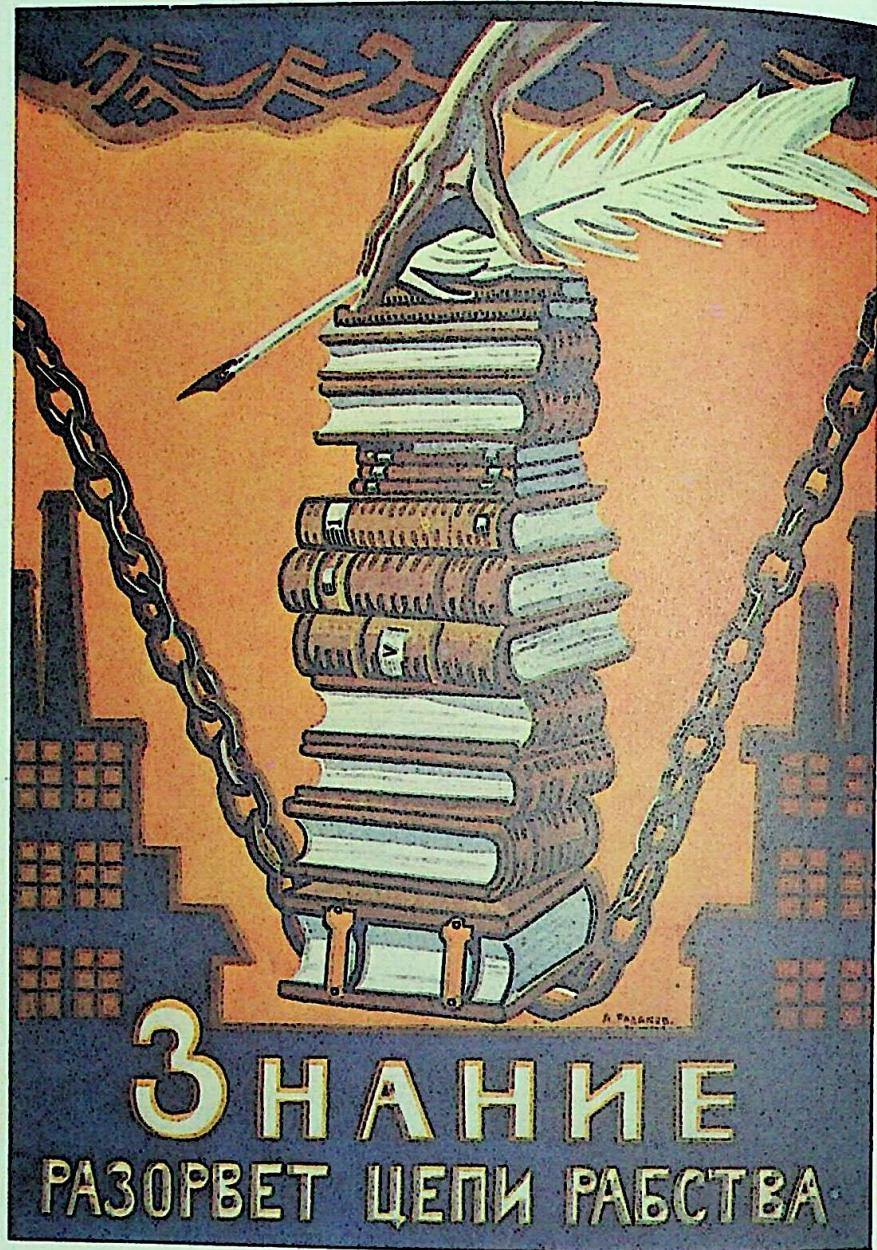
*Below: Stalin's file from the archives of the Okhrana, the tsarist secret police. In 1913 he was arrested and sent to Siberia because of his revolutionary activities. He was released after the March Revolution in 1917 and returned to Petrograd to take part in the November Revolution.*





Above: the Soviet attack on religion. A poster of 1931 shows the guns of imperialism lurking behind the cross of Christ: 'The black ravens (the priests) are preparing a brigand attack on the U.S.S.R. Proletariat be ready!' (British Museum, London.)

Above right: 'Knowledge breaks the chains of slavery': the Soviet campaign against illiteracy. The spread of literacy was one of the most impressive achievements of the Soviet régime between the wars. More impressive still, in terms of the welfare of the Russian people, was the enormous expansion of the Russian health service. By 1940 Russia had more doctors relative to the size of her population than either Britain or the United States. (British Museum, London.)



'Don't make a fool of yourself', one old Marxist told him, 'Everyone knows that theory is not exactly your line.' But within a few years 'socialism in one country' had become the new test of orthodoxy: all those, like Trotsky, who disagreed were banished from the party. A few years more and Stalin was being hailed, with his evident approval, as the greatest philosopher the world had ever known—not merely the infallible head of the Marxist faith, but the first man to solve certain problems in the interpretation of Aristotle and the only man who really understood both Kant and Hegel.

In the chaos left by the Civil War, Russia was at first in no position to build a fully socialist economy. 'We are paupers', Lenin had written in 1921, 'starving, destitute paupers. A comprehensive plan for us equals bureaucratic utopia'. By the New Economic Policy (NEP for short) begun in that year, though big business ('the commanding heights of the economy') was run by the state, almost all the land remained divided into peasant plots and a limited degree of private enterprise was allowed in the towns.

Only in 1927 did production on the land and in industry recover to the pre-war level.

#### The transformation of the Russian economy

The moderate wing of the Bolshevik party, led by Bukharin, was content to continue 'riding towards socialism at the pace of a peasant nag', continuing the gradual industrialisation of the Russian economy whilst, at the same time, seeking slowly to persuade the peasants to merge their private holdings into collective farms. Stalin, however, decided that the doctrine of 'socialism in one country' made necessary a crash programme of rapid industrialisation. A socialist Russia, Stalin argued, could survive encirclement by the imperialist powers only by ending her economic backwardness: 'We are fifty or a hundred years behind the advanced countries. We must make good this lag in ten years. Either we do it or they crush us.'

Rapid industrialisation was necessary also for the security of the Bolshevik régime within Russia itself. A party which claimed to base itself on the dictatorship of the

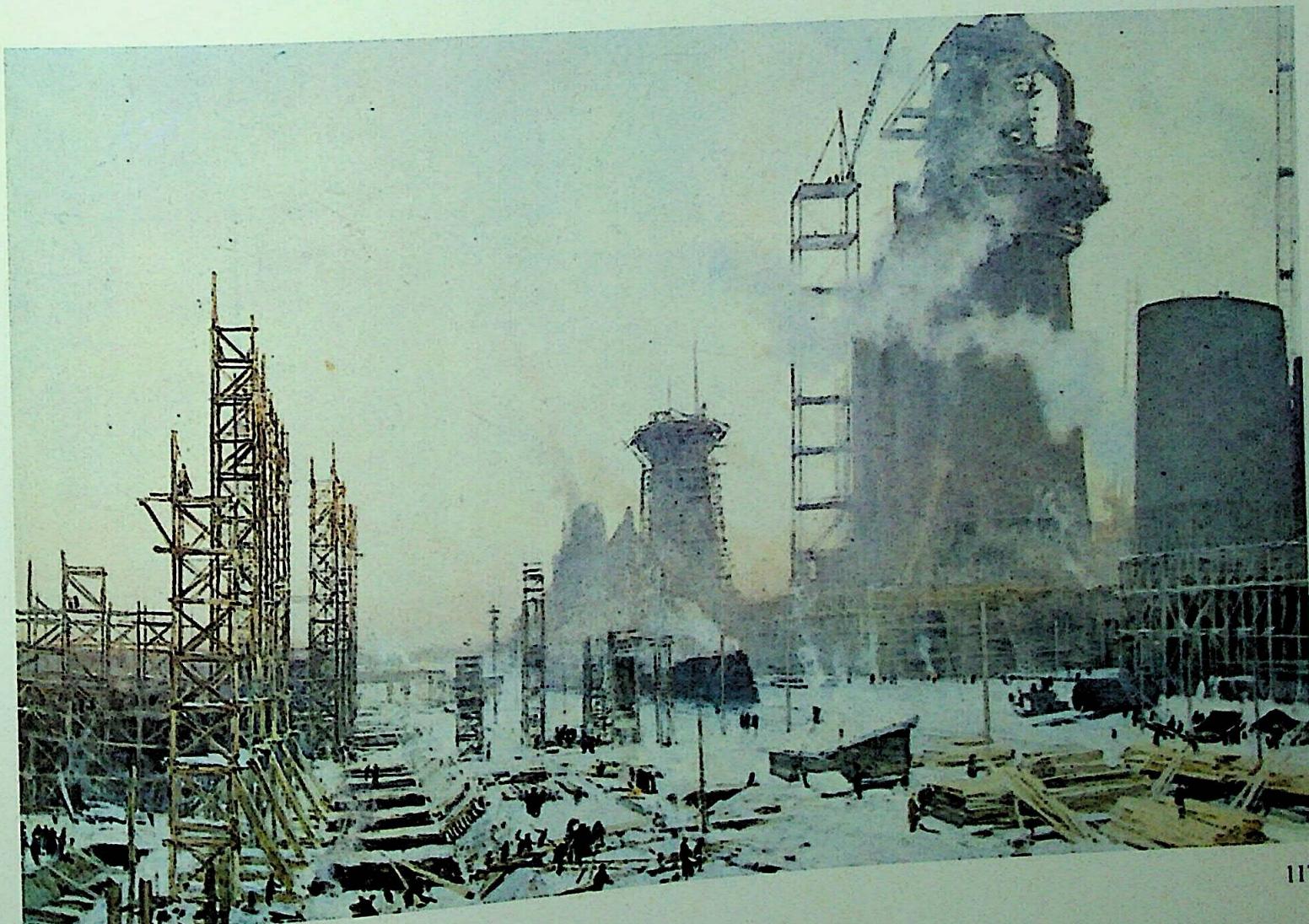


*Left: a still from Eisenstein's film, Que Viva Mexico. The skeleton in a gaudy costume symbolises the inevitable decomposition of capitalist society beneath its gaudy exterior. (National Film Archive, London.)*

*Below: 'The first Five Year Plan. A morning scene' by Y. Romas, a romantic view of a steel works under snow. The vast expansion of the Soviet economy during the first three Five Year Plans was concentrated in heavy industry. It made little immediate difference to the standard of living of the great mass of the Russian people.*

proletariat was bound to feel insecure so long as it ruled a predominantly peasant Russia. A crash programme of industrialisation, however, could only be financed by larger agricultural surpluses from the Russian peasants, both to feed the increased labour force in the towns and to pay for imports of foreign machinery. The obvious way to obtain these surpluses was to encourage the *kulaks* or 'rich peasants' who were the most efficient producers. Since this solution was unacceptable for ideological reasons, the only alternative was compulsory collectivisation.

In assessing the progress of the Russian economy after the end of NEP in 1928, the historian is faced with a massive falsification of evidence on a scale that has no parallel in the history of Europe. We know, for example, by the Soviet government's own subsequent admission, that even as late as 1952 grain production was deliberately exaggerated by no less than 60 per cent. There is scarcely a single economic statistic published during the period of the first three five-year plans (begun respectively in 1928, 1933, and 1938) on whose accuracy it is possible to rely. Stalin himself lived during these years in a fantasy world largely of his own construction. In 1935, for example, he claimed that 'We have had no poor now for two or three years' — and this





Left: 'Soviets plus electrification equals communism' (Lenin). The first electric light-bulb in a village in Bryansk province, 1928.

Below left: the beginning of the personality cult. Stalin smiles condescendingly at the furious opposition of capitalists, priests, and social democrats, and completes the first Five Year Plan in four years. Thirty years later Stalin seemed in danger of becoming an un-person in Soviet history books. The 1968 official history of the Russian communist party mentioned him by name only four times: once to quote Lenin's criticism of him, twice to criticise the cult of personality, and once to mention a wartime meeting with Churchill and Roosevelt. In the 1969 official history, however, there were signs that a partial rehabilitation had begun. (British Museum, London.)

Below: Lavrenti Beria, the most powerful of Stalin's henchmen, described by Stalin's daughter as 'a magnificent modern specimen of the artful courtier, the embodiment of oriental perfidy, flattery and hypocrisy'. Beria became head of the secret police in 1939 after the liquidation of his two immediate predecessors during the Great Terror. He was executed soon after Stalin's death in 1953 on a charge of being an 'imperialist agent': a charge whose cynicism was worthy of Beria himself.

Right: 'The White Crucifixion' by Marc Chagall (1938). Around the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews, Chagall portrays the suffering of the Jewish people. On the left Jews flee from persecution; on the right a synagogue and the sacred books are set on fire. (Chicago Art Institute.)



at a time when, as Professor Nove has observed, the price of bread stood higher in relation to wages than at any other time in Soviet history.

And yet it is clear, despite the fantasy world of Soviet statistics, that by draconian methods and a massive rate of capital investment, Russia became a major industrial state in the space of a single decade—more rapidly than any other state in European history. By 1939 its total industrial production was probably exceeded only by that of Germany and the United States. Russia's industrial achievement compelled even Hitler's reluctant admiration. He admitted privately in 1942:

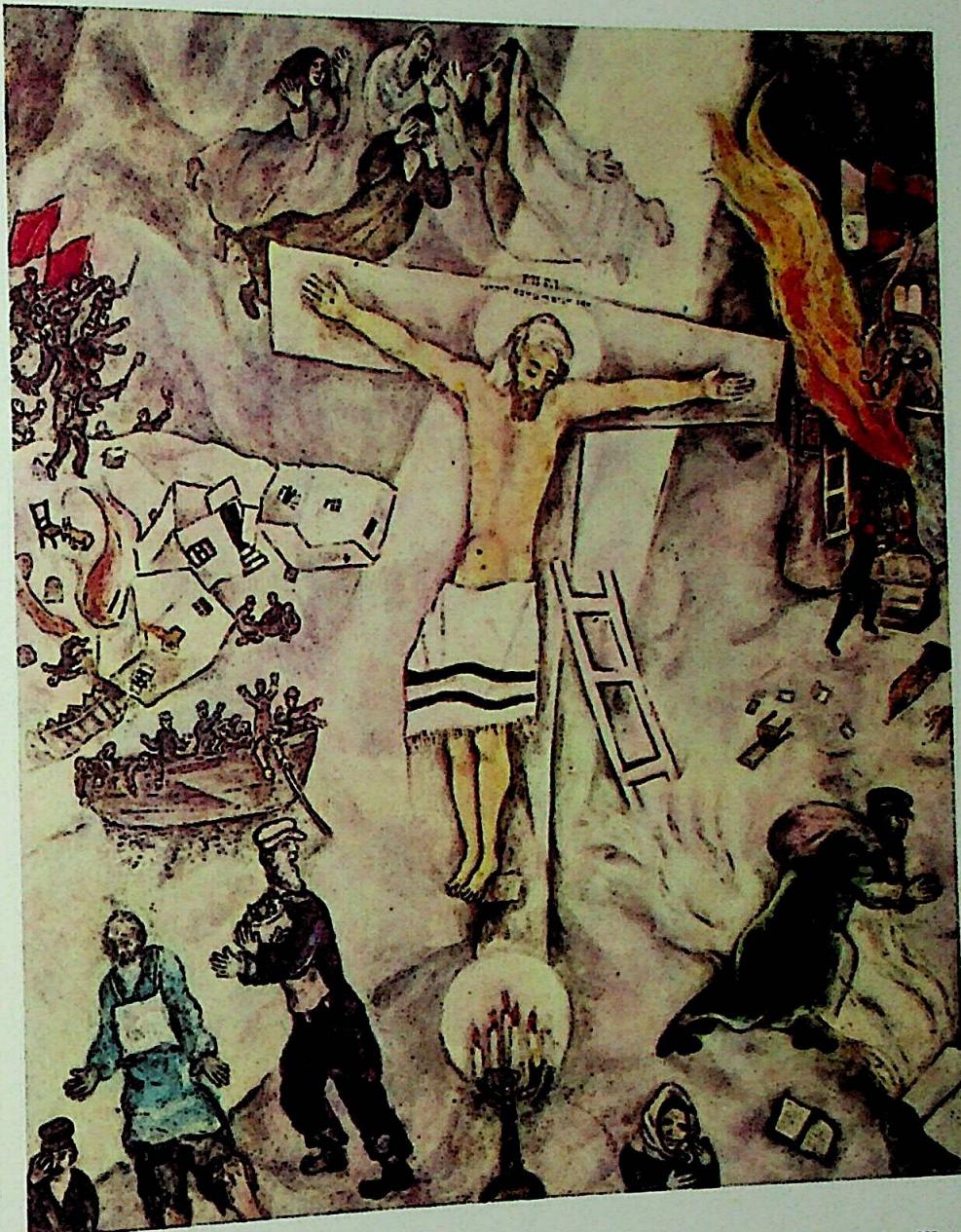
'The arms and equipment of the Russian armies are the best proof of [Russia's] efficiency in handling industrial manpower . . . Stalin, in his own way, is a hell of a fellow. He knows his models, Genghis Khan and the others, very well.'

The achievements of collectivised agriculture are far less impressive. In the short term they were nearly disastrous. The peasants' response to the collectivisation of their livestock was simply to slaughter as much of it as possible. By 1934, even according to official statistics, the total number of horses, cattle, and pigs had dropped by half, and the total number of sheep by two thirds. Production on the collective farms did not recover to the 1928 level until the nineteen-fifties. A party congress, held soon after Stalin's death in 1953, was told that after twenty-five years of collectivised agriculture grain production per head of the population and numbers of livestock absolutely were still lower than in Tsarist Russia.

Both the failures of collectivised agriculture and the successes of Soviet industry were purchased at an appalling cost in human suffering. Stalin later told Churchill that of the 10 million kulaks (a term rather loosely applied by Stalin) who had resisted collectivisation, 'the great bulk' had been 'wiped out'. During the first five-year plan Stalin created the world's first man-made famine. To pay for imports of foreign machinery and feed the growing labour force in the towns, he insisted on a vast increase in food expropriations from the countryside at the very time when food production was in decline. In 1931, when the famine was beginning, five million tons of wheat were sold abroad. Though Stalin, characteristically, denied that a famine even existed, more than five million Russians died of starvation. 'We were', said Bukharin later, 'conducting a mass annihilation.'

## The Great Terror

The barbarism which accompanied collectivisation and the first five-year plan in-



evitably aroused opposition within the Communist party itself. Those, like Bukharin, who opposed 'mass annihilation' seem to have pinned their hopes on the influence of Sergei Kirov, the party boss in Leningrad. Though a devoted admirer of Stalin, whom he described as 'the greatest man of all times and ages', Kirov was thought to be concerned by the brutality of Stalin's methods. In December 1934 he was murdered, probably on Stalin's orders. His death was the signal for the beginning of the Terror.

It seems increasingly clear that the immediate explanation for the Terror has to be sought less within the needs of Russian industrialisation or the interests of the Russian communist party than in the personal paranoia of Joseph Stalin. For this paranoia we have the evidence of, amongst others, one of Stalin's successors, Nikita Krushchev:

'Stalin was a very distrustful man, sickly suspicious; we knew this from our work with him. He could look at a man and say,

'Why are your eyes so shifty today?' or 'Why are you turning so much today and avoiding looking me directly in the eyes?'. This sickly suspicion created in him a general distrust even toward eminent party workers whom he had known for years. Everywhere and in everything he saw "enemies", "double dealers", and "spies". The most that can be said for Stalin is that, like many other despots, he probably convinced himself that his own enemies (real or imagined) were also the enemies of the state.

The Terror reached its peak in the years from 1936 to 1938. Everyone who had ever opposed Stalin on any issue was systematically sought out, accused of usually imaginary crimes, and executed. This, however, was only the beginning. Many of the relatives of Stalin's victims were shot or sent to labour camps. Stalin had the penal code altered to permit the execution of children of twelve years and over. All those arrested had, in addition, to provide the names of their accomplices in their imaginary crimes. If they refused, they were



Wzór okładki do broszury „W szponach komunizmu”.

Above: the myth of the Jewish world conspiracy, a Polish cartoon of 1937. ‘After Russia and Spain—it is Poland’s turn! Poland too must have a blood bath! Only ruins and ashes must remain’. Already the Jew leads Death to her harvest in Poland! Let us keep watch on this marching column and let us be awake, or woe unto us! Woe!!!’

Above right: ‘Guernica’ by Pablo Picasso, painted in 1937 after the destruction of the Basque market town of Guernica by German dive bombers during the Spanish Civil War. ‘Did you do that?’, a German soldier is said to have asked Picasso when he saw the painting in occupied France during the Second World War. ‘No, you did’, replied Picasso. (Museum of Modern Art, New York.)

tortured until they did so. By its very nature, therefore, the Terror provided itself with an increasing number of victims. ‘Today’, said the Russian writer, Isaac Babel, ‘a man talks freely only with his wife—at night with the blankets drawn over his head.’

The purge began to slacken in the later months of 1938 largely because the administration of the Terror was beginning to collapse under the sheer weight of those it persecuted. By now perhaps one in twenty of the entire Russian population had been arrested. Even the vast network of Soviet labour camps had become hopelessly overstretched. At the height of the Terror probably nine million people were in captivity, eight million of them in labour camps with an annual death rate of 20 per cent. ‘We shall have no further need’, Stalin told the 1939 party congress, ‘of

resorting to the method of mass purges.’

The section of Soviet society which suffered most from the Terror was, appropriately enough, the Russian communist party. Less than 2 per cent of the ordinary delegates to the 1935 party congress reappeared at the next congress four years later. Of those who failed to reappear, well over half had been shot. Of the 139 full members and candidate members of the Central Committee in 1934 only 24 were re-elected in 1939: 98 of the remainder are known to have been shot. By a process of natural selection those members of the Soviet leadership who survived the jungle conditions of the Terror, or who rose to power during it, were likely to possess unusual qualities of ruthlessness and servility. Both qualities are aptly illustrated by the comments on a letter from General Yakir, before his execution on a trumped-up charge in 1937 pleading for the safety of his family. The letter was published by the Soviet government in 1961. It has on it four marginal comments:

Stalin: ‘Yakir, trash and traitor.’

Voroshilov: ‘An exact description.’

Molotov: ‘Entire agreement with Stalin.’

Kaganovich: ‘A traitor, a pig.’

By a curious coincidence Voroshilov, Molotov, and Kaganovich were the only members of the Politburo at the time of Kirov’s murder to escape the purges which followed. All three continued to hold high office after Stalin’s death.

After the communist party, the Red Army was the chief target of Stalin’s paranoia. Seventy-seven of its eighty-eight most senior commanders were purged. In all, about half the entire officer corps, some 35,000 men, were shot or imprisoned, together with many of their wives and children. The Terror, as Krushchev later recognised, ‘also undermined military discipline, because for several years officers of all ranks and even soldiers in the Party and Komsomol cells were taught to “unmask” their superiors as hidden enemies’.

The havoc wrought by the Terror was one of the factors which determined the timing of the German invasion in 1941. German intelligence reports concluded that it would be another three years before the Russian high command recovered from the consequences of the purges. Though a new and efficient command emerged under the pressure of the German invasion, the Terror had to be paid for during the war, as Robert Conquest observes, ‘with the lives of hundreds of thousands of Russian soldiers, with hundreds of miles of Russian territory, and a great prolongation of the war itself’.

#### The cult of personality

While Stalin was busy decimating the Russian people he was also, in the words



of his protégé, Krushchev, engaged in 'the glorification of his own person by all conceivable means'. Russian writers vied with one another in the extravagance of their praise. One of them, Avdeienko, told the Seventh Congress of Soviets in 1935:

'I write books, I am an author; I dream of creating a lasting work. I love a girl in a new way; I am perpetuated in my children . . . All this is thanks to thee, O great teacher Stalin. Our love, our devotion, our strength, our heroism, our life—all are thine. Take them, great Stalin, all is thine. O leader of this great country . . . When the woman I love gives me a child the first word I shall teach it shall be "Stalin".'

Almost every Soviet achievement in whatever field was invariably attributed at least in part to a personal initiative by Stalin himself. During April 1935, for example, *Pravda* reported that Stalin's ideas were 'invaluable directions for all the work done in the sphere of fruit-growing in this country'; that improvements in mechanised bakeries owed much to 'the genius of our leader and master, comrade Stalin'; and that 'the daily instructions of comrade Stalin were the decisive factors which ensured the victory of Soviet cinematography'.

The 'cult of personality' nowadays provides a convenient explanation in the Soviet Union for those enormities of the Stalinist era which are publicly admitted. But the abnormalities of Stalin's personality and the glorification of it provide only an immediate explanation. It still remains necessary to explain how a situation could develop in which it was possible for the personal paranoia of one man to hold to ransom a

nation of two hundred million people. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the ultimate responsibility lies with Lenin.

Lenin had set out in November 1917 to establish the dictatorship of the proletariat, in order to prepare the way for the communist millennium. It had soon become clear, however, that the dictatorship of the proletariat meant in practice the dictatorship of the Bolshevik party. Before he came to power Lenin had insisted that 'What we do not want is the element of compulsion. We do not want to drive people into paradise with a bludgeon'. Once he became the ruler of Russia, however, he was prepared to argue that since the party knew the interests of the proletariat better than the proletariat itself it must, if necessary, use 'revolutionary violence' to defend the proletariat against itself. In 1921 he ordered the suppression of a mutiny of Kronstadt sailors, who had taken seriously his talk of the people's participation in the government of Russia and who felt themselves betrayed by him.

The Bolshevik party under Lenin's leadership was now, in Trotsky's words, persuaded that 'The party is always right'. From a state in which one party was always right it was to be only a short step in Russia, as in China, to a state in which one man was always right.

### The retreat from democracy

One of the most basic weaknesses of the Western democracies in the face of Hitler's Germany was their inability to grasp the extraordinary extent of Hitler's ambitions. Hitler had stated these ambitions quite clearly in *Mein Kampf*. Having first united all the German-speaking peoples, he proposed to revive the *Drang nach Osten*, the

eastwards march of the Teutonic knights in the Middle Ages, and then to recreate on a larger scale the slave empire they had founded in Eastern Europe: 'We start where they stopped six centuries before'. Germany, said Hitler, needed *Lebensraum* (living space) in the East. Once she had acquired it, the existing populations would either be removed or enslaved. Precisely because this malevolent vision of a new German empire seemed so fantastic, hardly anyone outside Germany took it seriously. And yet it was just such an empire that Hitler set out to build during the Second World War.

### The spread of fascism

While communism claimed to have abandoned nationalism for internationalism, fascism prided itself instead on an exaggerated nationalism. And yet, during the nineteen-thirties at least, fascism was the more powerful international force. Fascist movements sprang up almost simultaneously all over Europe, looking for inspiration more to Hitler than to Mussolini. These movements took many different national forms, but everywhere they shared the same militarist nationalism (usually with racialist overtones) and the same militant hostility to both communism and democracy. Everywhere, too, they sought to establish a one-party state in which the party, as in Germany, would control every facet of national life.

Outside Germany and Italy fascism was strongest in the relatively backward countries of eastern Europe and the Iberian peninsula. Except in Spain, which experienced a brief interlude of democratic government from 1930 to 1936, democracy in these countries had already largely dis-

appeared by the time of the Great Depression. The fascist parties of Portugal and eastern Europe (and in Spain after Franco became head of state) therefore aimed not, as Hitler and Mussolini had done, at the destruction of a democratic system of government, but at the transformation of authoritarian regimes from within into fascist dictatorships.

Nowhere were they completely successful. Even in Spain, though the Falangists (the Spanish fascists) supported Franco's appointment by the army as head of state in 1936 in opposition to the legal government, they had, as they themselves privately admitted, little influence on his policies. Many European states during the nineteen-thirties—among them Spain, Portugal, Poland, Hungary, Rumania, Yugoslavia, and Greece—acquired fascist overtones or mouthed fascist slogans. None had the means, however, even had they wished to do so, to become fully-fledged fascist states. They lacked the highly developed machinery of oppression and control which enabled Hitler and Stalin to establish the world's first completely totalitarian societies. Even Mussolini, though he devised the celebrated fascist slogan, 'Everything for the state, nothing against the state, nothing outside the state', lacked the means to put that slogan fully into effect. *Gleichschaltung* in Italy was never complete.

#### Democracy under siege

Though the victory of fascism was still far from complete at the outbreak of the Second World War, it seemed clear that democracy was in decline. It survived (except in Switzerland) only on the north-western fringes of the European continent: in Britain, France, the Low Countries, and Scandinavia. Even here democracy seemed to be losing faith in itself. The idea of progress which had been so popular only a generation earlier had now become desperately unfashionable. The inefficiency of democratic governments in finding effective solutions to the problems posed by the depression contrasted both with the rapid recovery of Nazi Germany and the apparent immunity of Stalin's Russia from the afflictions of capitalist economies.

The thirties saw something like a *trahison des clercs* among liberal intellectuals. Instead of defending democracy when it was under siege they poured scorn on it. 'Contemporary society', said T. S. Eliot in 1935, 'is worm-eaten with liberalism'. Only Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch, the much-mocked editor of the Oxford Book of English Verse, challenged Eliot's contempt for liberal democracy: 'What is the alternative? It is suppression; tyranny; in its final, brutal word-force. Look around Europe today. . . .

The resistance of the two great Western democracies, France and Britain, to the challenge of Hitler's Germany was far less

determined than their opposition to the lesser menace of the Kaiser's Germany only a quarter of a century before. But in the years before 1914 they had not been plagued by the economic crisis and intellectual doubts which beset them in the nineteen-thirties. There had been a profound change, too, in the mood of public opinion. During the decade before the First World War the peoples of France and Britain had grown steadily more convinced that war with Germany was sooner or later inevitable, and were ready for it. During the nineteen-thirties they tried instead to cling to the illusion that the Europe of the Locarno honeymoon had not really disappeared.

#### Appeasement

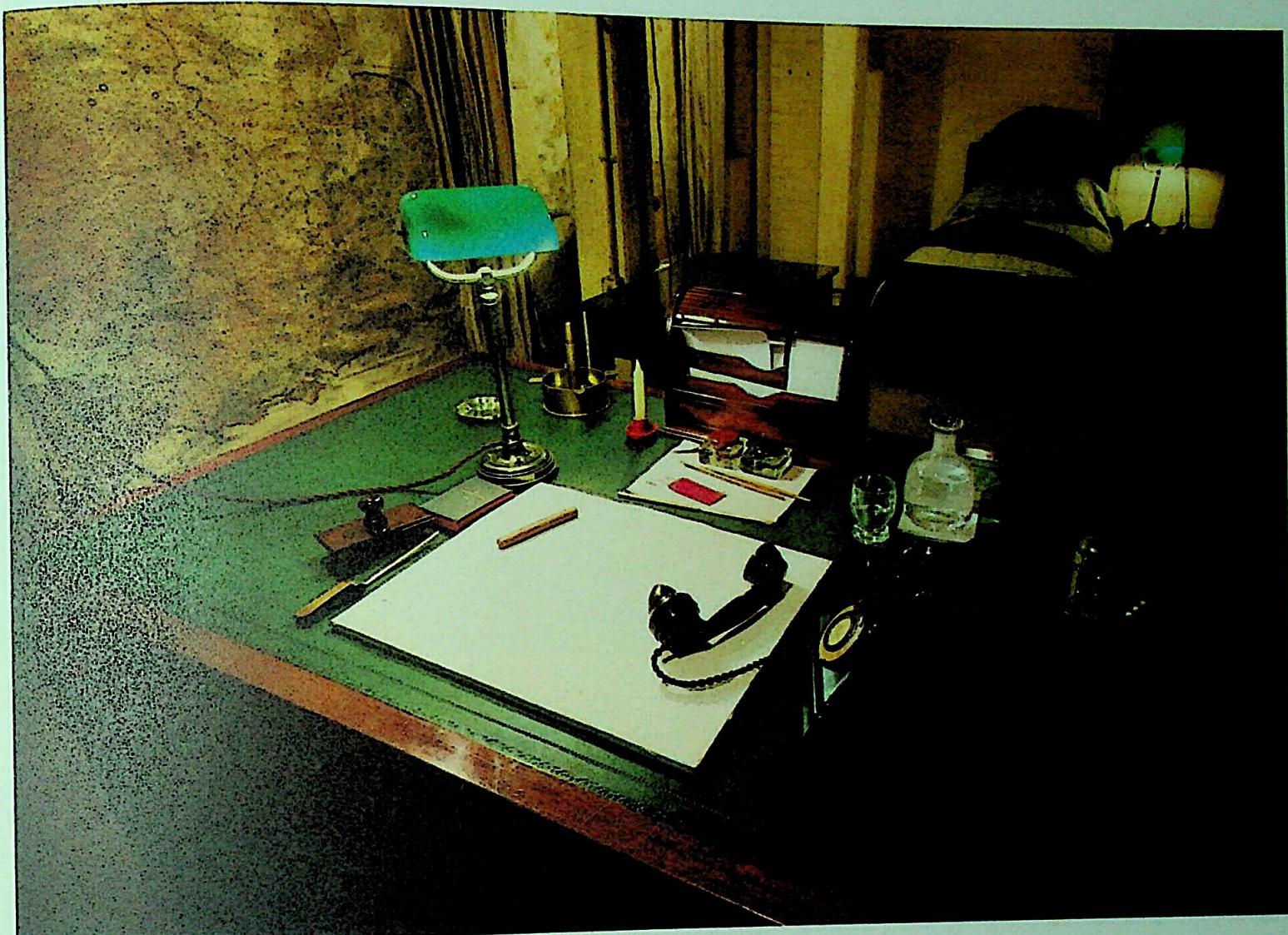
The classic example of the capitulation of Western democracy in the thirties is generally considered to be the Munich agreement of 1938, by which Britain and France

Right: a room in the 'Secret Place' below Whitehall. The remilitarisation of the Rhineland in 1936 prompted the Committee of Imperial Defence to begin the construction of a series of underground rooms protected against aerial bombardment (eventually numbering 150) for use by the cabinet and chiefs of staff in wartime. They were used for the first time during the Munich crisis of 1938. From the desk shown in the photograph Churchill was to make some of his most famous wartime speeches.

The Popular Front era in France.

Below: 'High finance against the nation'. A communist poster blames France's troubles on 'the parasites of the Bourse'. (Institute of Social History, Amsterdam.) Bottom: 'Frenchmen, beware! Communism has already set fire to Europe at both ends!' A right-wing election poster portrays the Popular Front as part of an international communist conspiracy. (Institute of Social History, Amsterdam.)





jointly betrayed Czechoslovakia to Germany in the belief that they could thus appease Adolf Hitler. But the crucial capitulation had come two years earlier with Hitler's occupation of the Rhineland.

As long as the Rhineland remained demilitarised in accordance with the terms of the Versailles treaty, the heart of industrial Germany lay exposed to the menace of a French invasion. The French system of alliances with the smaller states of Eastern Europe (which since the First World War had replaced its earlier alliance with Tsarist Russia) made sense only if France was able to counter German aggression in the East with retaliation through the Rhineland. Hitler, equally, could embark on a policy of expansion in eastern Europe only when he had protected his rear against French attack by the fortification of the Rhineland. The French journalist, Alfred Fabre-Luce, predicted in January 1936 the remilitarisation of the Rhineland which took place two months later—and he accurately predicted also the significance of Hitler's action:

'It would really be a way of asking France what her attitude would be in the event of war in eastern Europe. The lack of any

military response on our part would be taken as a sufficient indication.... Germany would then prepare her war in the East, confident of being able to resist us on the Rhine which she had fortified'.

Hitler's reoccupation of the Rhineland was, as he later admitted, one of the biggest gambles of his career:

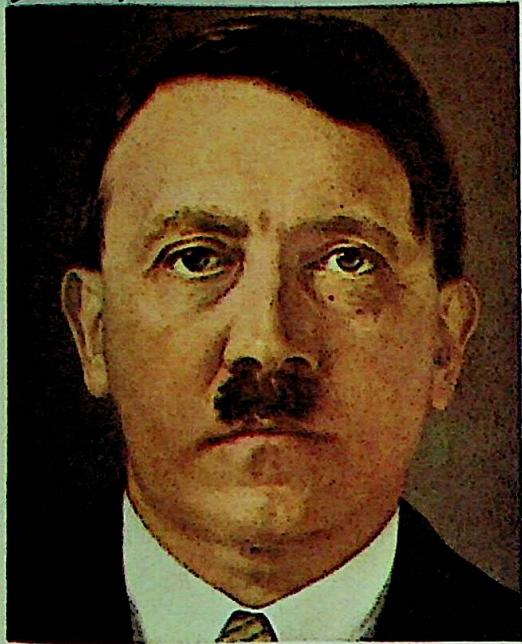
'If the French had then marched into the Rhineland we would have had to withdraw with our tails between our legs, for the military resources then at our disposal would have been wholly inadequate for even a moderate resistance.'

Ten years, even five years before, there is no doubt that the French army would have called Hitler's bluff. Even in 1936 France lacked not the ability to call Hitler's bluff, but the will to do so. Britain, which grudgingly agreed to supply only two divisions if France invaded the Rhineland, heaved a sigh of relief when it failed to do so. Just as the achievements of Nazi Germany during the nineteen-thirties were not unfairly described by Hitler as 'the triumph of will', so the failures of Western democracy during the same period were, above all, a failure of will.'

### The decline of France

With Hitler's invasion of the Rhineland, Germany replaced France as the leading state on the continent of Europe. France herself was by now afflicted with a growing feeling of inferiority towards Germany. As late as 1931 France had seemed almost immune from the worst effects of the depression, while Germany had been forced to come cap in hand to Paris seeking financial help. By 1936 the tables had been turned with a vengeance. While the German economy forged rapidly ahead, France was still in the middle of an economic crisis. Worse still was the problem of France's declining manpower. During the nineteen-thirties deaths began to exceed births for the first time. France's population was actually lower in 1940 than it had been fifty years before. The most striking fact about France's international position, observed Colonel Charles de Gaulle in 1934, was that two Germans were reaching military age for every one Frenchman.

During the middle of the nineteen-thirties European affairs seemed increasingly polarised into an international struggle between fascism and communism. In 1935 Stalin reversed his earlier instructions to Euro-



pean communists to concentrate on the destruction of democratic socialism and advocated instead a new policy of 'Popular Front' alliances between socialists and communists against the menace of fascism. When the Civil War broke out in Spain in 1936 Hitler and Mussolini sent help to Franco, and an International Brigade of left-wing sympathisers partly supplied with Russian arms fought on the side of the republican government. Hitler, however, was in no hurry to ensure Franco's victory. The longer the war continued, he believed, the worse would be the demoralisation of liberal, democratic Europe.

The rest of Europe saw the Civil War in simplified terms as a struggle between fascism and communism. Many European conservatives were by now anxious that by opposing Hitler they might be playing into the hands of Stalin. This attitude was most prevalent in France. Ever since the beginning of the twentieth century the French right-wing parties had been the leading advocates in Europe of a tough, uncompromising policy towards Germany. But in 1936 they suddenly changed their mind. Faced with the prospect of a Popular Front government in France led by the socialist, Léon Blum, they coined the slogan, 'Better Hitler than Blum!'

### The climax of appeasement

The policy of appeasement practised by the French and British governments during the nineteen-thirties reflected absolutely the wishes of their populations. The Munich agreement of 1938 was the most ignoble surrender in the history of modern British foreign policy. Yet as a direct result of that

surrender Neville Chamberlain attained a peak of popularity which few, if any, other peacetime prime ministers have ever equalled. The British people as a whole greeted the betrayal of Czechoslovakia with an almost indecent relief of which they later felt ashamed. Godfrey Winn gave thanks to God and Neville Chamberlain, and felt 'no sacrilege, no bathos, in coupling those two names'.

The only British politician who might have rallied the British people from a policy of appeasement was Winston Churchill. But Churchill, after a brilliant early career in which he had held almost every major cabinet office, had disappeared into the political wilderness. The eccentricity of his views on the Indian sub-continent only served to cast doubt on his constant warnings of Hitler's designs in Europe. His hour was yet to come.

### 'A twenty year truce'

The history of the nineteen-thirties suggests perhaps that the First World War, though a war caused by European rivalries and whose battles were overwhelmingly concentrated on the European continent, affected Europe less profoundly than it affected Asia. In Asia it set India on the path to independence, Japan on the road to Asian mastery, and turned China's face against the West. In Europe, on the other hand, though the war acted as a catalyst to revolution in the east, in the west it only interrupted Germany's bid for the mastery of Europe. In 1919 Marshal Foch had described the peace settlement of Versailles as 'a twenty years' truce'. In Europe, at least, that was all it proved to be.

*Above left: Adolf Hitler: a portrait in honour of his fiftieth birthday, 20 April 1939. The Times reported that the 'keynote' of the elaborate celebrations organised for Hitler's birthday was set by Göring in a message to the German people: 'Adolf Hitler is the greatest German of all time... To serve him, who as a man of fifty today stands in the full bloom of his creative powers, to help to achieve his magnificent plans for Germany, will in the future, as in the past, be the aim and object of our lives, our actions, and our dealings. The Almighty sent us the Führer in our hour of need. To Him, in ardent supplication, we raise this prayer: Lord God, protect the Führer and bless his work!'*

*Above: Neville Chamberlain returns from Munich on 30 September 1938, bringing 'peace for our time'. Churchill called the Munich settlement 'a total and unmitigated defeat'. Almost all the British press, however, described it as a triumph of British diplomacy.*

# Chronological Charts

## THE FIRST WORLD WAR AND THE WORLD BETWEEN THE WARS

Western Europe	Central and Eastern Europe	The Outside World
1914 Britain declares war on Germany (4 August) Battle of the Marne (5-12 September) Race for the Sea (October- November)	Assassination of Francis Ferdinand (28 June) Austrian ultimatum to Serbia (23 July) Russia mobilises (30 July) Germany declares war on Russia (1 August) Germany declares war on France and invades Belgium (3 August) Russian defeats in East Prussia (August-September)	New Zealand takes Samoa (August) Britain takes Togoland (August) Australia takes New Guinea (September) Turkey enters the war (October) Japan takes Kiaochow (November) British protectorate in Egypt (December)
1915 Allied offensives in Artois and Champagne (February-October) Italy enters the war (May) Haig British c.-in-c. (December)	Gallipoli campaign (February 1915-January 1916) Large German gains on the Eastern Front (May-October) Bulgaria enters the war (October)	Japan submits Twenty One Demands to China (January) South African troops take German South-West Africa
1916 Conscription in Britain (January) Battle of Verdun (February-November) Easter Rising in Dublin Battle of Jutland (31 May) Battle of the Somme (July-November) Lloyd George prime minister (December)	Brusilov offensive (June-September) Rumania enters the war (August)	Last German garrison in Cameroons surrenders (February) Sykes-Picot agreement on Middle-East Arab revolt against Turkey Wilson re-elected president of the United States (December)
1917 Imperial War Cabinet meets in London (March) Nivelle offensive (April-May) Mutinies in French army. Passchendaele (July-November)	Germany begins unrestricted submarine warfare (February) Tsar abdicates (15 March) Bolshevik revolution (7 November)	United States enters the war (April) China enters the war (June) Sun Yat-sen sets up rival government in Canton Montagu declaration on India (August) Balfour declaration on Palestine (November)
1918 Final German offensive in the West (March-July) Foch 'commander-in-chief of the Allied armies in France' (April) Allied counter-offensive (July-November) Battle of Amiens (8-11 August) Armistice (11 November) Lloyd George coalition re-elected (December)	Treaty of Brest-Litovsk (March) Civil War begins in Russia (1918-20)	Wilson's Fourteen Points (January)
1919 Paris peace conference begins (January) Treaty of Versailles (28 June) Treaty of St Germain with Austria (10 September) Treaty of Neuilly with Bulgaria (19 November)	Communist rising in Berlin (January) Bela Kun in power in Hungary (March-August) Weimar Republic in Germany (August) D'Annunzio occupies Fiume (September 1919- December 1920)	Amritsar massacre in India (April) Fourth of May Movement in China United States Senate rejects the Versailles treaty Government of India Act (December)
1920 Treaty of Trianon with Hungary (4 June) Treaty of Sèvres with Turkey (August) Italian workers occupy their factories (August)	Kapp putsch in Berlin (March) Battle of Warsaw (August)	Non-co-operation begins in India (August)
1921	Treaty of Riga (March) New Economic Policy in Russia	Harding president of the United States End of Anglo-Japanese alliance Foundation of Chinese communist party Washington Naval conference
1922 Irish <i>Dail</i> ratifies treaty establishing Irish Free State (January) Bonar Law British prime minister (October) Fascist March on Rome (October)	Stalin secretary-general of Russian communist party	End of British protectorate in Egypt Southern Rhodesia rejects union with South Africa Gandhi imprisoned (1922-4)
1923 Baldwin's first ministry (May)	Occupation of the Ruhr (January) German inflation at its height (November) Hitler leads unsuccessful Munich putsch (November)	Sun Yat-sen signs alliance with Russia (January) Coolidge president of the United States Southern Rhodesia gains virtual self-government

## THE WORLD BETWEEN THE WARS

Western Europe	Central and Eastern Europe	The Outside World
1924 Ramsay MacDonald Britain's first Labour prime minister (January) Matteoti assassinated in Italy (June) Baldwin's second ministry (November)	Death of Lenin (January)	
1925 Mussolini declares Italy a one-party state (January) Locarno treaties signed in London (December)	Hindenburg president of Germany	Death of Sun Yat-sen Abd-el-Krim's rebellion in Morocco (1925-6) Druse rebellion in Syria (1925-7)
1926 General Strike in England (May)	Germany enters League of Nations	Chiang Kai-shek begins Northern Expedition Hirohito Emperor of Japan Imperial conference recognises autonomy of dominions
1927	Stalin wins struggle for power in Russia	Chiang Kai-shek begins attack on Chinese communists Simon commission visits India
1928 Kellogg-Briand pact signed in Paris	First Five Year Plan begins in Russia	Chiang Kai-shek claims reunification of China
1929 Ramsay MacDonald's second Labour government (June)	Trotsky leaves Russia	Hoover president of United States Chu-Mao soviet in Kiangsi Wall Street crash (October)
1930 London Naval Conference	Effective political power in Germany passes to Hindenburg and palace camarilla (March) Last Allied troops leave Rhineland (June)	Civil disobedience campaign in India Uriburu president of Argentina (September) Vargas president of Brazil (October) Rebellion in Indo-China
1931 National government in Britain led by Ramsay MacDonald (August) Statute of Westminster on British Commonwealth		Gandhi-Irwin truce Manchurian incident (18 September) Mao elected first chairman of Chinese Soviet Republic
1932 Worst year of the Great Depression	Worst year of the Great Depression Nazis emerge as largest party in Germany Russian famine at its height	Worst year of the Great Depression End of British protectorate in Iraq Japanese army establishes puppet state of Manchukuo
1933	Hitler becomes German Chancellor (30 January) Reichstag fire (27 February) Enabling law completes Hitler's dictatorship (23 March)	Franklin D. Roosevelt president of United States Japan leaves League of Nations
1934	Hitler's Night of the Long Knives (30 June) Death of Hindenburg. Hitler head of state (August)	Long March in China (1934-5)
1935 Baldwin's third ministry (June)	Kirov assassinated in Russia (December)	
1936 Edward VIII king of England (January) Abdicates and succeeded by George VI (December) Popular Front government in France (1936-7) Spanish Civil War (1936-9)	Saar returns to Germany (January) Nuremberg race laws (March) Hitler reoccupies Rhineland (March) Stalin's Terror at its height (1936-8)	Government of India Act Italy invades Ethiopia Italy annexes Ethiopia Anglo-Egyptian treaty Tosei-ha faction in Japanese army defeats Kodo-ha Alliance between Mao and Chiang (December) Congress victory in Indian elections (February)
1937 Neville Chamberlain prime minister (May)		War between China and Japan (1937-45)
1938	German annexation of Austria (March) Munich agreement (November)	
1939 Britain and France declare war on Germany (3 September)	German annexation of Czechoslovakia (March) Germany invades Poland (1 September)	

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